

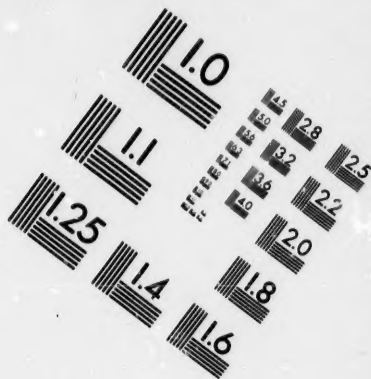
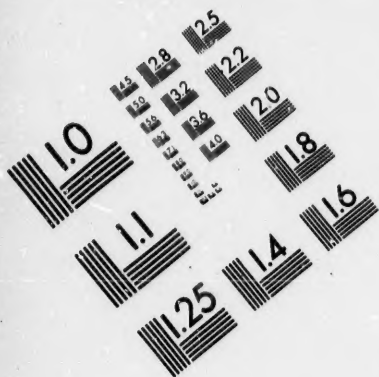
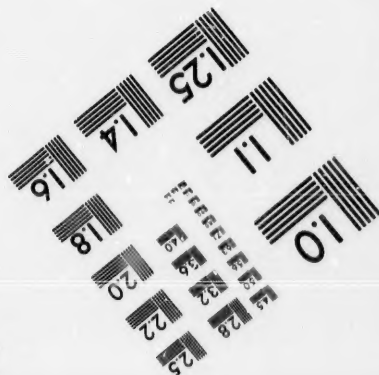
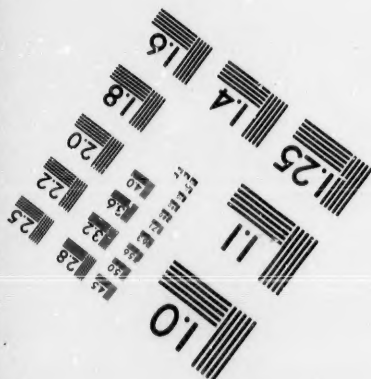
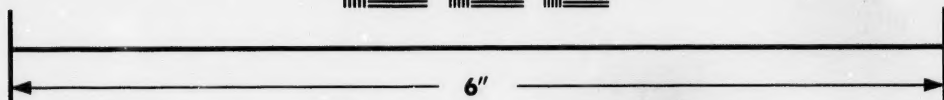
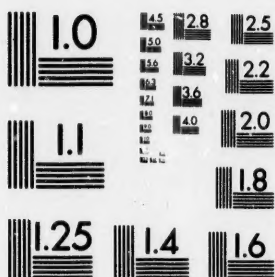


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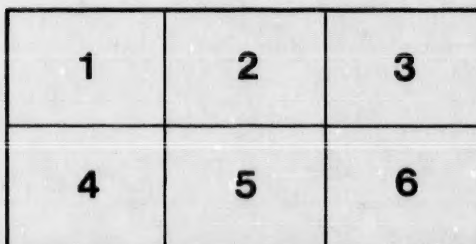
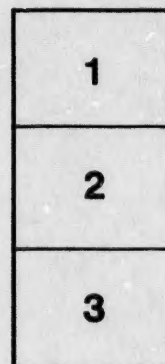
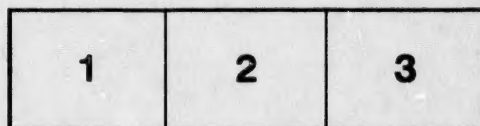
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MEDITATIONS
FOR
EVERY DAY IN THE YEAR,
ON THE PRINCIPAL DUTIES OF
CHRISTIANITY.

Translated from the French of Père Griffet, of the Society of Jesus,

By the Rt. Rev. Wm. Walsh, D. D.

Bishop of Halifax.

IN TWO VOLUMES.
VOL. I.

NEW-YORK:
EDWARD DUNIGAN & BROTHER,
151 Fulton Street.
1849.





Painted by Carlo Belci.

THE SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD.

Published by Edward Dumigan, New-York.

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BY
THE RIGHT REV. WILLIAM WALSH, D.D.,
BISHOP OF HALIFAX.

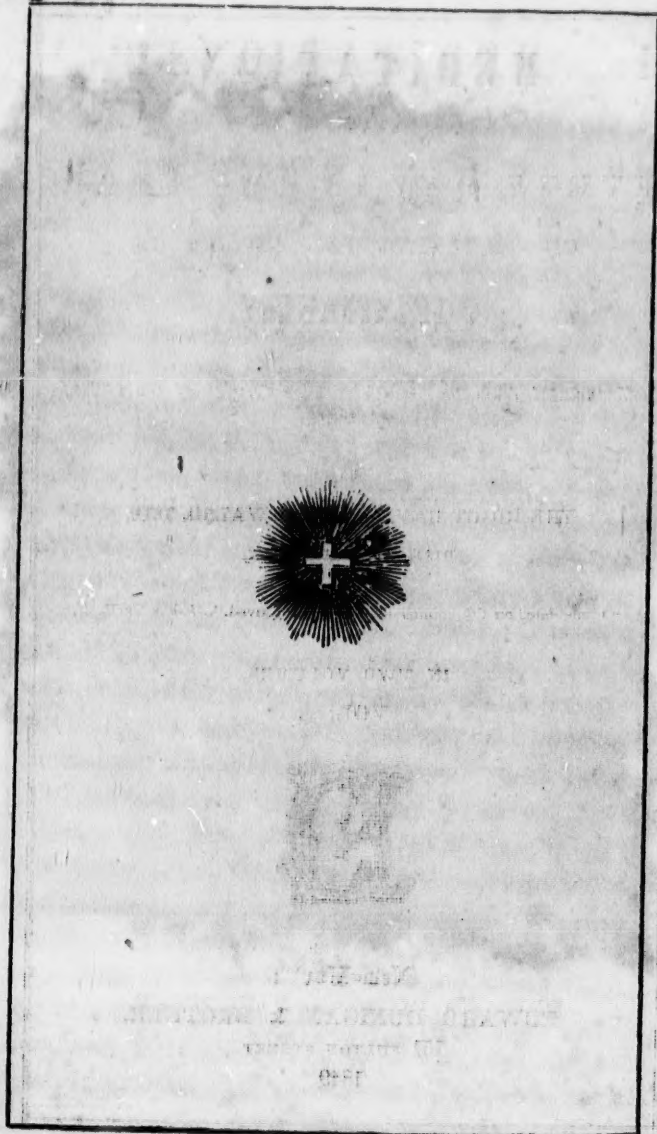
"I meditated on thy commandments which I loved."—*Psalms cxviii. 47.*

IN TWO VOLUMES.
VOL. I.



New-York :
EDWARD DUNIGAN & BROTHER.
151 NULTON STREET.
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P R E F A C E .

THE following meditations were compiled by the learned Father Griffet, of the Society of Jesus, at the express desire of "the Good Dauphin," the father of the unhappy Louis XVI. This virtuous prince addressed an earnest letter to the pious author, in which he besought him to write a work of this kind, which would treat of the fulfilment of the precepts of the gospel, and of all the duties of a man of the world. He requested that each meditation should be divided into two points, and that those should be as concise, and as full of matter for reflection, as possible. His wishes were literally fulfilled, as those solid and beautiful meditations fully prove. They are an abridged, but complete, treatise of Christian morality, and contain the soundest principles of moral theology, which are applicable to all conditions of life. Concise, but clear, brief, but instructive, they afford abundant topics for meditation to all ranks and classes on every day of the year. Those who are wont to excuse themselves, by a multiplicity of business, from devoting some time to daily meditation and

pious reading, are here deprived of every excuse. The professional man, the merchant, the artisan, the labourer, will be here furnished with useful instruction, and in a manner suited to his time, his opportunities, and condition. No work could be better adapted for a text-book for religious meditation in Catholic families, both on account of its size, and because the duties it inculcates, are merely those, which it is the bounden duty of every Christian to fulfil.

That those meditations did not fail to produce a salutary effect upon the illustrious prince for whom they were composed, is proved by his edifying life. His memory is still dear to every good man in France. At an early period of life he showed a strong love of virtue; and, as he advanced in age, discovered a solidity of judgment which flattery never could corrupt. The persons with whom he associated, and, still more, those who were called his friends, reflected honour upon his choice.

To qualify himself for the government of the kingdom entrusted to him by Providence, there was no means of acquiring information, or enabling him to form just opinions of men and things, which the Dauphin did not anxiously seek to discover, or of which, when discovered, he did not avail himself. In the disgusting scenes which passed around him, he never mixed; his undeviating rectitude and pu-

city of conduct were a strong, though silent, censure upon them ; but he was never deficient in respect towards his father. He was twice married, and his conduct, to each of his wives, was a model of conjugal tenderness and fidelity. He made considerable progress in the sciences, and was particularly skilled in architecture. Having delineated the plan of a superb palace for the royal residence at Paris, one of the ministers offered to obtain the consent of the monarch for its immediate construction. "That," said the Dauphin, "would destroy the whole of its merit ; for the great beauty of it is, that it will remain in my drawer and never cost his majesty's subjects one penny."

On one occasion the king offered to increase his pension, and he replied that it would be more agreeable to him if the taxes should be lessened by that sum.

He clearly saw through the revolutionary and irreligious views of the modern philosophers, and did every thing in his power to counteract them ; but he patronized the arts, and favoured, in a particular manner, the advocates of religion. Some of the ablest works written in France against the Atheists or Deists, were encouraged by him ; and he is said even to have contributed to that invincible work of the Abbe Bergier, "*Deism refuted by itself.*"

His abhorrence of the scandals of the court, its

profusions, dissipation, and intrigues, prevented him from interfering in public concerns; but when the destruction of the Jesuits was under discussion, he attended the council, and spoke warmly against the measure. He declared, that the blow aimed at them, was really designed for the ruin of religion, and would produce the most disastrous results. It must be admitted that he spoke with the accuracy of a prophet.

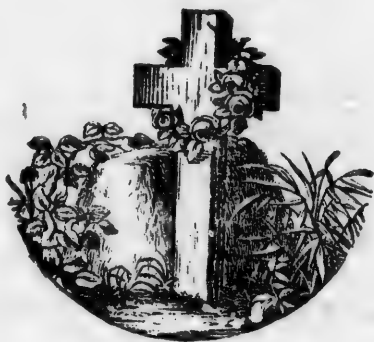
It was a custom in France, that when a child in a direct line of inheritance to the throne attained a certain age, he was presented to the parish priest, and his name was inscribed on the Parochial Register of Baptisms. When the unfortunate Louis XVI. attained the age required for the ceremony, the Dauphin presented him to the parish priest, and the Register was produced. The last name inscribed on it was that of a working mechanic, and the young prince's name was to be written immediately under it. "Observe this!" said the Dauphin to his son, "it is in this manner we shall stand at the day of judgment. On that awful day there will be no distinction of persons."

With such a character and disposition it may be easily conceived that the Dauphin was not a favourite with the philosophers or their partisans. They affected to ridicule his retired habits, and what they termed his monastic virtues; yet they did justice to

the general wisdom and humanity of his views, and the system of order and spirit of economy which he displayed by his conduct. They admitted that the latter, if he should come to the throne, would repair the finances of the kingdom ; that his religious and moral habits would restore decency and honour to the court ; and his general feelings of virtue and benevolence make him the father of all his people.

When he was seized with his last illness, it was proved how generally he was beloved. The churches were filled with persons of every rank, who offered prayers to heaven for his preservation ; and when the public was informed of his death, they assembled round the statue of Henry IV., and loudly expressed their concern for their loss. The accounts, which were afterwards published, of his piety, constancy, and resignation, during his long illness, confirmed them in these sentiments, and obtained for him the appellation of "the Good Dauphin."*

* See *Memoires pour servir à l'histoire de Mons. le Dauphir, Père de Louis XVI.*





MEDITATIONS
FOR
EVERY DAY IN THE YEAR.

JANUARY 1.

ON THE EMPLOYMENT OF TIME.

I. *Nothing is more precious than time.*

It is given us in order to serve and glorify God, and to merit heaven: it is not, then, a thing which is properly our own, and of which we can dispose as we please. It is a talent which is entrusted to us in order to profit by it, and for which we must one day render an account to our Sovereign Judge. It is even more precious as its duration is equally rapid and uncertain. It passes away like lightning; it vanishes like a dream. Already the past is no more, the present flies from us, and the future is uncertain. All the moments of our life are reckoned, and there

is not one which does not increase either the treasure of our merits, or the number of our sins. The true Christian is avaricious of his time ; he fears to lose it ; he divides the whole of it between the duties of religion and those of his state. This is what the Scripture calls, " full days, days of salvation." *Dies pleni, dies salutis.*

II. *Nothing is more abused than time.*

How is it employed in the world ? How do the greater part of mankind spend their time ? In useless visits, in frivolous, dangerous, or criminal conversations. Endless amusements occupy the greater portion of it, and it is entirely filled up by dissipation, idleness, and sloth. Serious and useful occupations are always the briefest, and the most neglected. We complain of and abridge the time that we are forced to bestow upon them. Do not suffer me, O Lord, to misspend any longer to my destruction those precious moments that ought to be employed only for my salvation.

JANUARY 2.

ON THE LOVE OF GOD.

I. *It is our first duty to love God.*

Because God deserves and requires our love. He deserves it for his own sake and for his benefits. For his own sake: he is the most perfect, and consequently the most amiable of all beings; he is the author and source of everything that touches and ravishes our hearts; even the charm and beauty of sentiment are an effect of his power. He deserves our love by reason of his benefits: what do we possess that we have not received from God? Is it not he who has created and who preserves us? Is not everything we behold, and everything that we are, a gift of his magnificence and bounty? We have only to cast our eyes upon ourselves and upon everything that surrounds us, to find a motive for loving him. He not only *deserves* our love, but he *requires* it. "Thou *shalt* love the Lord thy God." Behold the first and the greatest of com-

mandments—one which comprises the whole law and the prophets.

II. *The fulfilment of this duty is of great extent.*

It consists in bestowing on God habitually and perpetually an entire and absolute preference over every other object—in preferring him even to ourselves, to everything that is dear to us, and to all creatures. It is sufficient to love our neighbour *as* ourselves: God alone are we bound to love *more* than ourselves. Reflect attentively on this saying of Jesus Christ:—"He that loves his father or his mother more than me, is not worthy of me."—He who does not render me the measure of love which I require, and which I have a right to exact from all the souls that I have created for my glory, is an infidel; he sets limits and restrictions to a preference which should have none.

JANUARY 3.

ON OBSERVING THE LAWS OF GOD.

I. *He who loves God, observes the laws of God with fidelity.*

He is careful to please him ; he always fears to offend him.—True love infallibly produces a conformity of sentiments and wills. He, therefore, has no other will but that of God. Everything that God reproves he condemns, and everything that God ordains, he embraces with submission and even seeks with anxiety. When God speaks, he knows nothing but obedience. At the voice of this Supreme Master his self-love is hushed, his passions are silent, the dearest inclinations of his nature are disregarded.

II. *He observes them with ease.*

The law of God often appears stern and severe to nature. It always retains us within the bounds of duty ; it does not tolerate the least weakness ; it shows no mercy to any irregular affection ; it subjects to a thousand restraints, and some-

times requires great sacrifices. But its observance costs nothing to a soul that is deeply penetrated with a love for its God. To such a soul, sacrifices are pleasing, and punishments and restraints become agreeable. It imagines that it cannot give God too many proofs of its love. The just man observes, without effort and without repugnance, the laws which love has engraved on his heart. Can I recognise myself in this portrait?—can I believe that I love you, O my God, whilst I feel so much repugnance in obeying you, whilst I mingle so much reserve and so many infidelities with my obedience?

JANUARY 4.

ON THE FEAR OF GOD.

I. *The obligation of loving God does not exclude the obligation of fearing him.*

Love and fear are not incompatible sentiments. We love our parent, and we fear him. A faithful servant loves his master, and he dreads him. These differ-

ent sentiments arise from the different relations under which the same object is presented to our view. When I consider that God has created me, when I reflect on what he is in himself, and on the graces which I have received from his bounty, I feel that I owe him everything: I love him more than myself.—But when I think on the terrible effects of his power and justice, a religious fear takes possession of my soul. I humble, I annihilate myself before this all-powerful Master, and inexorable Judge.

II. *This fear alone is not sufficient to fulfil our obligations in all their extent.*

It is only the beginning of his wisdom; it ought to lead us to the practice of all precepts, and the first is that of love.—You who fear the Lord, says the wise man, be not contented with that, love him also. *Qui timetis Dominum, diligite illum.* God has never particularly said: “*Fear me with your whole heart;*” but he has said one hundred times: “*Love*

me with your whole heart." Now if love ought to occupy the whole heart, fear should not enter it except to introduce love and to be lost in love. "Fear God and observe his commandments, beginning by the first, which includes all the rest, for this is all man." In this consist the salvation, bliss, and perfection of man.

JANUARY 5.

ON THE REFERENCE OF OUR ACTIONS TO GOD.

I. *Every action which cannot be referred to God, is vicious in itself.*

An action is referred to God when we propose to ourselves in performing it an end that is laudable, useful, and worthy of God; when it is offered to him, when we act for his glory, and in conformity to his will. If an action be such that we cannot absolutely propose to ourselves in it such an end, it must necessarily be vicious in itself, and consequently unworthy of the acceptance of God. What a vast field for reflection does not this

principle open to our view! Dare I offer this action to God? Dare I think or say anything contrary to his will, or which will not contribute to his glory? Undoubtedly not. Therefore, I ought to abstain from such an action. God cannot be glorified unless by actions which are stamped by wisdom, justice, and sanctity, and I cannot sanctify myself but by actions which will glorify him.

II. *Every action which a Christian soul does not refer to God, is defective in its motive :*

For if it do not seek to please him, it then endeavours only to satisfy itself. It acts only to please its self-love, its ambition, its cupidity, its effeminacy, its vanity, and its intemperance. Now, who doubts but that a motive like these, renders an act defective? "Whether you eat or drink," says St. Paul, "do all for the glory of God." Is it a counsel or a precept? It is evident that it is a precept. Everything good, laudable, and useful,

that is done in the world, is done by the influence and concurrence of the Divine will and power. We should therefore refer it to God: he is its first principle; it is then just that he should be its last end.

JANUARY 6.

ON SCRUPLES.

I. *There are reasonable scruples which we ought to have.*

Be scrupulous for having violated the laws of God and the Church, for having weakened or helped to despise religion and the truths of faith, for having combated by your discourses or actions, the maxims of the gospel. This scruple is just and lawful; it is reasonable and well-founded. In such a case listen to the voice of your conscience: it is the voice of God.

II. *There are pernicious scruples which we ought to avoid.*

If a reasonable scruple be a virtue, one that is carried to an excess, becomes a

considerable and most pernicious fault. A scrupulous person of this kind disturbs and torments himself, he judges himself with too much rigour, he makes a crime and a monster of everything. He places the principal and accessory in the same scale, and makes no distinction between what is essential and what is unimportant. Let us pray to the Lord to enlighten us on the regulation and extent of our duties; let us not serve like the gross and carnal Jews, in *a spirit of fear and slavery*. Let us go to him with the same confidence which children have in a parent by whom they are tenderly loved.—Let the peace and joy of the Holy Ghost be always in our hearts, for everything that brings only trouble and discouragement, comes from the spirit of darkness.

JANUARY 7.

ON THE LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOUR.

1. *It consists in not doing to another what we would not wish to be done to ourselves.*

“Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” Behold the principle from which spring all our duties with regard to our neighbour: we ought to love him as ourselves. Our self-love, this guide so deceitful and dangerous, is then the most excellent master that we can consult on the love of our neighbour. Listen to it, and it will tell you that it feels itself wounded when it is opposed, when it is mortified or humbled by bitter reproaches, by stinging railleries, by contemptuous airs, by spiteful and disagreeable words, by wicked detractions or black calumnies. Spare your neighbour, therefore, those unpleasant things which you feel so sensibly, and which you have so much difficulty in enduring. Treat his self-love as you would desire your own to be treated, and you will be right.

II. *It consists in doing for our neighbour everything that we would wish him to do for us.*

We are, then, obliged to succour him in

oppression, to sustain him in weakness, and to comfort him in affliction.—Can a Christian be less charitable than that Roman emperor who said to his courtiers, when he had passed only one day without doing good: “My friends, I have lost a day!” He did not reckon amongst the days of his life those that were not marked by some act of goodness.

JANUARY 8.

ON THE EXTENT OF THE PRECEPT OF LOVING
OUR NEIGHBOUR.

I. *It is immense in its extent.*

It extends to all men without exception. Every man is created to the image of God, and if we love God, we ought to cherish and respect his image wherever we find it, without any regard to states and conditions. The great and the humble, the rich and the poor, are all brothers in Jesus Christ, and ought to be united by the same ties of charity and love. Neither should we regard difference of nations:

there is in Christ Jesus neither Jew, nor Gentile, nor Greek, nor Barbarian. The whole human race forms but one family, of which God is the father, the chief and the sovereign. Nor difference of religion: the charitable Samaritan had compassion on the unhappy Jew who was covered with wounds, although he professed a different religion; and this Samaritan is proposed to us as a model.

II. *The love of our neighbour ought to be regulated in its effects.*

No one should be excluded from our charity; but there are some to whom we ought to give a preference in the exercise of this virtue. Those who are bound to us by the ties of blood, those who serve us, and labour for us, those whose wants are more extreme, and whose evils are more pressing, and more deplorable, enjoy more particular claims on the effects of this universal love. There should be order and regularity in everything.—Happy is he who can say with the spouse in

the Canticles: "It is the Lord who regulates and guides me in my works of charity and mercy." *Ordinavit in me charitatem.*

JANUARY 9.

ON THE DEFECTS OF OTHERS.

I. *The defects of others should serve to make known to us our own.*

We necessarily live with men who are full of defects. Who is there that has not some? Deficiencies of the heart and spirit, of the character and humour, of conduct and manner. If one were to close his eyes in order not to perceive them, they would become sensible by their effects. Now, the first use which a Christian ought to make of this knowledge, is to say to himself: "If this man has such or such a fault, have I not myself similar or greater? Open, O my God, the eyes of my self-love! Alas! I am ignorant of my own faults, and am enlightened only on the faults of others.

II. *They should serve to exercise our patience.*

He that is in power is, without doubt, to reprove and correct the faults of those that are subject to him ; but, nevertheless, he will always have enough to exercise his patience. Patience is a necessary virtue ; in order to practise it we must suffer, and great sufferings are not common. Those which we experience from the defects of others are a constant and daily trial, which furnishes us with more frequent opportunities of meriting heaven. Let us imitate, in this respect, the unalterable tranquillity of the God of all power, who so patiently bears with the vices of his creatures.—“Charity is patient,” says the apostle ; “it suffers all things, it endures all things.”

JANUARY 10.

ON THE RENUNCIATION OF OURSELVES.

I. *What is this renunciation ?*

It is a disposition to quit all, to lose all,

to sacrifice all, and to endure all, rather than commit the smallest crime. It is a submission of all our passions to the sway of religion and duty. We renounce ourselves when we restrain ourselves, when we mortify our self-love and natural inclinations, to observe the law of God. This renunciation extends to everything that can offend God; it influences entirely whatever we do to please him. It includes the entire sacrifice of ourselves, that absolute preference which we owe to our Creator.—It is the abridgment of the gospel, the principle and foundation of the whole morality of Jesus Christ.

II. *Is every Christian bound to renounce himself?*

Yes, undoubtedly; Jesus Christ has said it in express terms: "If any one wishes to come after me, let him renounce himself." And lest we should imagine that this rigorous precept was addressed only to those who are obliged by the sanctity of their state to an extraordi-

nary perfection, St. Luke has taken care to remind us that he said it to all without exception. *Dicebat ad omnes.* Whether you be rich or poor, on a throne or in a cottage, you must renounce yourself if you wish to be a true Christian. Without this renunciation you will always prefer your own glory, your own will, your own satisfaction, to that of your Sovereign Master. Dispense a single man from this obligation, and you will dispense him from the obligation of loving God; you will dispense him from being a Christian.

JANUARY 11.

ON THE OBLIGATION OF CARRYING OUR CROSS.

I. *Every Christian is obliged to carry his Cross.*

“If any one wishes to come after me,” said the Saviour, speaking to all, “let him carry his Cross.” *Tollat crucem suam.* And what is the cross that we are obliged to carry? There are many crosses, be-

cause, in the language of the Scripture, the word cross signifies pain and suffering. We should therefore carry—1st, The cross of our state; no one is exempt from this. 2d, The crosses which God sends us, the illness, the sufferings, the sensible and painful losses. 3d, The crosses which we have to suffer from men; their contradictions, their malice, their perfidy and ingratitude. 4th, In fine, the crosses which we impose on ourselves by the mortification of our senses. When we carry all these crosses with submission, they unite us to that crucified God who alone, by his grace, can render them of infinite price and value.

II. *He is obliged to carry his cross every day.*

Tollat crucem suam quotidie.

Because there is no day in which he should not restrain, contradict, and mortify himself, in order to observe the law of God—no day on which he is not obliged to make a thousand sacrifices, painful to nature and self-love, which liken

him to Jesus crucified. What do you think, therefore, O my God, of those days of pleasure and amusement when we are occupied only in satisfying our passions and caprices? Can we by a life so abandoned to idleness and the profane joys of the world, hope to fulfil the obligation of carrying our cross? Can it give us the least resemblance to Jesus Christ?

JANUARY 12.

ON TWO DIFFERENT WAYS OF CARRYING OUR
CROSS.

I. *We may carry our cross on our body.*

Either by sickness or the pains which accompany it—involuntary crosses which do not depend on us, and which we are obliged to suffer in spite of us—or by mortification of the senses, by withdrawing from the delights and conveniencies of life, by fasting and other exercises of penance, which are voluntary crosses, and may become excessive if they pass beyond the bounds of Christian prudence.

Those who live in the world can rarely practise habitually the same austerities as solitaries. They are obliged to avoid everything that would deprive them of that strength which is necessary for the faithful discharge of all the duties of their state ; but they can have other sufferings and mortifications which will supply their place.

II. *We may carry our cross on our heart.*

And this manner of carrying it has no limits. The powers of the heart are always greater and more extensive than those of the body ; they are infinite and immutable. When the heart pleases, it can embrace, by its desires, everything that the body is unable to endure. The latter succumbs, and is easily broken down under the weight of its evils, whilst the former can always act and always desire. Without quitting my occupation, without deranging my affairs, without exciting the attention of men, I can desire the torments of the martyrs, and the

austerities of the anchorets. I can be disposed to suffer, and thus I may carry the cross of Jesus Christ in my heart, and in the interior of my soul. What, O my God, can be more capable of sanctifying me than this constant and habitual union with all the rigours of your cross?

JANUARY 13.

ON THE SENTIMENTS WHICH A CHRISTIAN SHOULD
HAVE IN CARRYING HIS CROSS.

I. *A Christian who considers his sufferings in relation to God, ought to suffer with resignation.*

God is our master, and nothing happens in the world which is not permitted or ordained in the counsels of his wisdom. We should, therefore, humbly submit to his holy will. It will be accomplished in spite of us, and we are culpable if we do not follow it. "There is no counsel against the Lord," says the wise man. *Non est consilium contra Dominum.* No force, no prudence, no counsel, can

prevail against him. Our views are too narrow, and our measures too weak, to arrest the course of his eternal designs. What remains for us then but to prostrate our heads, and bend our knees, under his all-powerful hand, and repeat this memorable word of the most unfortunate, and the most patient of men: "The Lord has given me these blessings; he has taken them away. He has accomplished his will: may his name be blessed!"

II. *A Christian who considers his sufferings with regard to himself, ought to suffer with joy.*

1st, Because sufferings make him resemble Jesus Christ, a resemblance which is a sign of salvation, and a mark of predestination. 2d, Because they increase the treasure of his merits, as a "moment of light tribulation worketh in us an immense weight of glory." This is what made the Apostle St. Paul say—I am pleased with my afflictions, and I swim in joy in the midst of the tribulations that

surround me ; and St. Andrew, at the sight of the instrument of his sufferings—O happy, and precious cross ! *O bona Crux !* and St. Teresa—Either to suffer or to die ; and another servant of God—Not to die, O Lord, but to suffer.

JANUARY 14.

ON IMPATIENCE.

I. *Impatience is pernicious in consequence of the faults which it makes us commit.*

I do not here speak of those first motions which the vivacity of temper may produce in us against our will ; these are the unhappy remnants of original sin which we cannot destroy, and which we are obliged to combat and subdue. I speak of that free and deliberate impatience which disturbs the serenity of our soul, and which produces angry words, threats, haughtiness, and sometimes oaths and blasphemies. Consider the numberless faults against charity and humanity, that you commit every day in conse-

quence of a vice which appears trivial, to which you abandon yourself without remorse, and which you confess without sorrow, and you will be terrified.

II. *In consequence of the advantages we lose by it.*

Salvation does not always depend on great sacrifices: the opportunities for making them are rare. It depends on our fidelity in performing our duties, in suffering with patience, and even with joy, the contradictions and vexations which are to be found in every state, the faults and negligences of those who serve us, the delays and annoyances which afflict nature in what it desires with greatest ardour. Behold what ought to fill that treasure of merits which Jesus Christ exhorts us to lay up for eternity, and which we forfeit by our impatience.

JANUARY 15.

ON MURMURINGS.

I. *To murmur at the afflictions which God sends us, is to attack his providence.*

It is he who wills and ordains them. If, therefore, we murmur or complain, we rise up against him, and revolt against his orders. Nay, more : by thus contradicting the will of God we necessarily fall into contradiction with ourselves ; for after having said to him in his prayer : " Lord, may thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," we murmur because this will is accomplished. We submit in appearance when we pronounce these words, and we retract, we revoke, we disavow them, when we murmur at afflictions.

II. *To murmur at the afflictions which we suffer from men, is to doubt the Almighty power of God.*

It is true, that he does not ordain the effects of man's malice, because he neither is, nor can be the author of sin : but he permits them, and if he did not permit them, men would not have power to injure us. It is not, therefore, God who has inspired this enemy with the wish which he has to injure you ; but it is God who

has given him the power ; it is God who, in arming him with this deadly power, permits him to exercise it against you.—“When a man strikes you,” says St. Augustine, “you ought to imagine that the hand of the Lord is always concealed under that of a man ; the one acts, and the other permits—the one strikes the blow, and the other allows it to fall. Do not, therefore, regard the former, recognise the superior power of the latter, and be patient.” *Prorsus ad Deum tuum refer flagellum tuum.*

JANUARY 16.

ON AMBITION.

I. Ambition makes men artificial and hypocrites.

It wishes to elevate itself at any price ; it will sacrifice any virtues it may possess in order to arrive at the honour or dignity which it desires. The entire language and conduct of an ambitious man are false. He affects great disinterestedness,

although he is possessed by a spirit of interest—a modesty which reaches even to humility, although he is filled with the spirit of pride—a sincere respect for religion, although he is always ready to abandon it in order to advance his fortune. A false friend, a false Christian, a false devotee, he has no zeal, nor attachment except for his own aggrandizement. This base and interested passion corrupts and destroys all truth in the heart; it does not suffer the least trace, the smallest spark of true virtue to exist there.

II. *Ambition renders men cruel and inhuman.*

It sacrifices everything, and will spare nothing to satisfy itself. What rivers of blood, and what torrents of tears have not been made to flow in the world by the greedy and insatiable ambition of conquerors! What animosities, what hatred, what fury, what cruel vengeance, what black perfidy does it not every day produce amongst those who strive to supplant

each other! To what excesses of cruelty and injustice do they not venture! O my God, what is man when he abandons thee, in order to receive and establish in his heart an idol which he adores in preference to thee!

JANUARY 17.

ON FLATTERY.

I. *A Christian should never flatter.*

Flattery supposes an interested desire to please, at the expense of truth. What is more contrary to the spirit of Christianity than such a design? A true Christian always seeks to please his God, who is truth itself, and he loves rather to displease men, than to offend him. If he avoids telling them unpleasant truths when he is obliged to manage their delicacy, he avoids still more carefully the nourishing of their self-love and pride by lying flatteries.

II. *A Christian never wishes to be flattered.*

He is rather anxious to know his faults for the purpose of correcting them. He dreads flatterers as the most dangerous enemies of virtue, and he prefers the useful reproaches of a severe and stern censor who pardons nothing, to the insidious language of a flatterer who applauds everything. He knows that his self-love is already too capable of misleading him, and that it does not require the assistance of complaisant and artificial men with their artful praises. He does not pretend to establish his merit on their vain applauses ; he disdains to do so ; he despises all human glory, and is sensible only to that of God.

JANUARY 18.

ON RICHES.

I. *We may by a detachment from riches sanctify ourselves in the midst of wealth.*

One is not obliged actually to divest himself of them in order to secure his salvation. This exterior renouncement

is a counsel of perfection ; but the interior renunciation is a precept. Yes, every Christian is strictly obliged to be ready to love and sacrifice all his goods sooner than violate the law of God. It is in this true, sincere, habitual and persevering disposition that that detachment consists, without which we cannot be saved. You are not even allowed to divide your heart between God and your riches. "You cannot," says the Lord, "serve two masters at once."—You must choose between one and the other—to belong entirely to God, or entirely to riches. To whom will you give the preference?

II. *By the good use of riches.*

You are only the depository and steward of them ; you have not power to employ them in all the useless and disorderly purposes which are suggested by your caprice. The use which we make of them, should be always conformable to the laws of justice, charity, and Christian temperance—of justice, in order to ren-

der every one his own—of charity, in order to succour the poor—of Christian temperance, in order to confine ourselves to what is purely necessary, without extending our outlay beyond the indispensable exigencies of our condition. What reflections are not suggested by these maxims! What reasons have we not to fear and tremble for the salvation of the rich!

JANUARY 19.

ON MEEKNESS.

1. *What ought to be the principle of that meekness which is recommended to us in the gospel?*

We behold meek souls, but their meekness is only a natural virtue, a virtue of constitution which requires no effort, and which consequently can have no merit. We see others who are meek only because they are insensible; nothing troubles them, because nothing affects them.—Others, in fine, have only an artificial

and hypocritical meekness, which appears in their countenance and their discourse, and which serves only as a cover for the dark sentiments of their soul. Evangelical meekness is not, therefore, a gift of nature, it is susceptible of feeling, it is free from dissimulation and artifice. It is a gift of grace ; it has for its principle that divine charity which "beareth all things."

II. *What are its effects ?*

1st, It renders us agreeable to God, who particularly cherishes meek and compassionate souls. David was so persuaded of this that he beheld no quality more capable of obtaining the graces of God. *Lord*, said he, *be mindful of David*, and above all, remember that spirit of mildness and *meekness* which has always formed his character. 2d, It renders us agreeable to men who are alienated from us by the harshness of the opposite vice. 3d. It enables us to correct the faults of those who are entrusted to our

care. 4th, It is almost infinite in extent, and consequently has very great merit in the number and continuity of its sacrifices.

JANUARY 20.

ON THE STATE OF PERFECTION.

1. *Every Christian is not obliged to embrace a state of perfection.*

This state consists in retiring from the world, in quitting its goods, and being obliged by particular engagements to the practice of the evangelical counsels; it is the state of the perfect.—Jesus Christ does not oblige us to embrace it. “If you wish to be perfect,” said he to the young man who begged him to show him the way of salvation, “sell all your goods, give them to the poor, and follow me.” If you wish: *Si vis*. He was then free either to wish it or to abstain from it. No precept was given him, but a counsel, the practice of which was left to his own option. It sometimes happens that a dis-

gust for the world, joined to a great desire for our salvation, induces us to quit it for ever. This is an illusion, particularly when we are bound to the world by indissoluble ties. Sanctify yourself in your state. This is what God requires of you, this is the true means of pleasing him, and of meriting heaven.

II. *Every Christian is obliged to aspire to the perfection of his state.*

“Be ye perfect,” said the Saviour, “as your heavenly Father is perfect;” a sentence which can be understood only of the perfection that is peculiar to each state, as Jesus Christ did not wish to derange the order of society by his precepts. It is, then, to the perfection which belongs to your state, that you ought to aspire, for this you ought to labour incessantly every day of your life. Support me, O Lord, in so long and so difficult a labour. I am weakness itself; my strength and my perseverance can come only from thee.

JANUARY 21.

ON THE STRAIGHT WAY.

1. *It is the only one that leads to heaven.
Arcta via est quæ ducit ad vitam.*

Because it is the only way in which man is entirely occupied with his duties; in which he separates himself as much as possible from everything that is mere pleasure and amusement, in which he labours incessantly to mortify his senses and subdue his passions. It is called straight because it restricts nature and self-love, and is ever careful to restrain their motions, and repress the unbridled licentiousness of their desires. This is the way of sanctity and justice; it is the way of the elect. We retire from it by grievous sins; we re-enter it by penance. Even the just falls sometimes in it, but he raises himself again—his falls are rare, and he is always careful and ready to repair them.

II. *Those who lead the ordinary life of the world do not walk in the straight way.*

Their life is but a series of days sacrificed to ambition, avarice, or pleasure. Such a life is the way of perdition. In it cupidity triumphs, religion is forgotten or unknown. O great God, at what a distance are not worldlings from the straight way! Alas! all lose themselves, and wander in that "broad and spacious way" that leads to hell. In which of those two ways have you hitherto walked?

JANUARY 22.

ON THE NECESSITY OF ADVANCING IN VIRTUE.

1. *We should every day make new progress in virtue, in order to fulfil the obligation of attaining the perfection of our state.*

This perfection is not the work of a day. Justice and sanctity are a course, in which we have always a step to make. If you do not advance, if you suspend your course, you are guilty of negligence;

you lose sight of the object that should continually engage your attention.

II. *We should every day advance in perfection, in order to resist that natural inclination which would withdraw us from it.*

This irregular inclination is an enemy which we carry within us, and which seeks only to lead us astray. It is always ready to attack us by force or by surprise. Now, if you cease to fight against it for a moment, it will be sure to obtain the victory. Labour then, without ceasing, to subdue pride and vanity, sloth, and the love of pleasure, which dispute with virtue for the empire of your heart. Every offer which you make to subdue them is a step towards perfection; you will increase by it the treasure of your merits. The true faithful Christian, says the Saviour, is like a skilful merchant who wishes to lose nothing, but turns everything to profit. Shall it be said that you have less ardour

and avidity for the treasures of heaven,
than worldlings for those of earth?

JANUARY 23.

ON DISCERNING GOOD AND BAD EXAMPLES.

1. *A Christian should be on his guard
against the contagion of bad example.*

The world is filled with it; we everywhere meet nothing but sinners who make no scruple of violating the laws of God, hypocrites who use religion for their own purposes, and impious men who seek to render it odious or contemptible. Mourn at the sight of those disorders, and fear to imitate them; place yourself under the protection of the God of virtues; beseech him to cover you with his wings, and to prevent this constant and dangerous communication which you are obliged to have with sinners, from defiling the beauty of your soul. Unceasingly implore the succours of his grace both for them and for yourself; for them, in order that he may move and

convert them; for yourself, that he may preserve you from the contagion of their bad example.

II. *A Christian should be careful to profit by good example.*

All sanctity, all light, is not extinguished in Israel. We find even in the world examples of virtue, and pious and faithful Christians—in a small number, it is true, but this is the small number of the elect. We should profit by their example, and say to ourselves—*Non potero quod isti et istæ?* Why cannot I live as holily as such and such persons who are in the same state of life? Nothing is more easy than to discern between good and bad example. Take the gospel and compare the example with the rule. If it be conformable to it, you should follow it, and profit by it. If it differs from it ever so little, it is a bad example.

JANUARY 24.

ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE MULTITUDE.

I. *We easily console ourselves by the example of the multitude.*

It is a torrent which drags us along.— We fancy we are at liberty to march in the track of the greater number; we are afraid of appearing singular; we look upon the ordinary conduct of men as an example which justifies us. We forget this maxim which is so reasonable and so true—that in order to be right we must not follow the most frequented, but the surest road. *Non qua itur, sed qua eundum est.*

II. *This example of the multitude should rather fill you with alarm than confidence.*

Since Jesus Christ has laid down the conduct of this multitude as an infallible mark of reprobation. Because he has warned us that the far greater number walk in the broad and spacious road that leads to hell. Whence it follows, that

we must have a singular virtue, and lead a life entirely different from the world, in order to be saved.

JANUARY 25.

ON SINGULARITY.

I. *There is a vicious singularity which we ought to avoid.*

The exterior practices of religion may vary according to the different states in which we are placed by Providence. Christian piety has neither the same effects nor the same duties in the world as in the cloister, or in the secrecy of solitude as in the commerce of society. Such an action, such an exterior practice of piety is holy, generous, heroic; but it is not suitable to your state. You should therefore abstain from it. Remain always within the limits of a sound discretion, be satisfied with observing the law of God, with simplicity, and without eclat, pomp or affectation.

II. *There is a necessary singularity of which we should not be ashamed.*

It is that which distinguishes our life and conduct from those of sinners. There is so much disorder in the world, that the most simple piety, which ought to be most common, appears singular in its eyes. But this is a singularity which is necessary and indispensable, and for which a Christian should never blush. All men are subject to the law of God; and when we remain within the letter of this law, without making any addition to it, if the world advise us to recede, we should not listen to its voice. This would be to blush for the gospel, to sacrifice religion to a weak complaisance for this world that is reprov'd and cursed by God, a world which condemns without distinction everything that is opposed to its errors and its vices.

JANUARY 26.

ON THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MORTAL
AND VENIAL SIN.

I. *All sins are not equal ; some are mortal and others venial.*

God does not view in the same light the lie of excuse and the black calumny, distraction at prayer, and the total abandonment of that sacred duty. Mortal sin is the death of the soul ; it deprives it of the light of grace. Venial sin places it only in a state of languor and weakness : the one renders it entirely odious to its sovereign Master ; the other merely makes it disagreeable in his eyes. With the one you cannot receive any sacrament without profaning it by sacrilege ; with the other you derive less fruit from the sacrament because you receive it with less purity. The one is like death, which totally destroys ; the other like sickness, which weakens the body without destroying it. The one will be punished

in the next life by eternal sufferings ; the other by most vigorous pains, but of lesser duration.

II. *This difference should not prevent you from having a great horror of venial sin.*

1st. It is always an offence against God ; should we require any other consideration to make us hate, fear, and avoid it ? 2d. We are not always certain whether this sin, which seems venial to us, does not appear mortal before our sovereign Judge ; his thoughts and judgments are as far removed from ours as heaven is from earth. He perceives in our actions a thousand defects which escape our notice, because we are guided by the false lights of our self-love. 3d. Venial faults, when multiplied by our neglect and tepidity, insensibly dispose us for great crimes, according to that saying, "He that despises small faults will fall by little and little into great ones."

JANUARY 27.

ON ATTACHMENT TO VENIAL SIN.

I. *In what does this attachment consist?*

In committing voluntarily and habitually, without scruple or remorse, a sin that appears light in our eyes ; in confessing it without sorrow or any desire of correction ; in saying to ourselves : " This is only a venial sin, I, therefore, need not be afraid to commit it." It is thus we accustom ourselves to numberless lies in conversation, distractions in prayer, negligences in the service of God, and the practice of our duties. We do not wish to fail in what is essential, but we neglect everything else, and look upon it as nothing.

II. *This attachment is very criminal in the sight of God.*

1st. If a sin of frailty be an evil, what must not one be, that is committed through habit, and with reflection? 2d. Is it loving God, is it showing that we have the

least idea of the respect and obedience which we owe him, is it observing the first commandment, to fall habitually and voluntarily into all venial faults when occasion offers, because they are not great crimes? What would a king think of a subject who promised to obey him in such a limited manner, that he would abstain only from crimes that deserved death? 3d. It is very much to be feared, that those, who are so strongly attached to venial sins, are not in the state of grace. And if the case be so, what should not a person do to correct such a disposition? Let us, therefore, pass over nothing. Every thing is great in the service of God; every thing in it, is of the utmost importance to our souls.

JANUARY 28.

ON PURITY OF HEART.

I. *Purity of heart is rather an assemblage of all virtues than of one in particular.*

It is for this reason that it alone can

render us worthy of the vision and enjoyment of God in heaven. "Blessed are the clean of heart, (says the Saviour,) for they shall see God." Why is this vision of God promised only to those who have a pure heart? Will it not be granted to the humble, the charitable, the penitent, and mortified? Yes, undoubtedly; but Jesus Christ here speaks of purity of heart alone, because it alone comprises all other virtues. If you have a pure heart you must of necessity be humble, patient, charitable, penitent, and mortified.

II. *Purity of heart forms an union of all virtues, without any mixture of vice.*

This exemption from mixture and change is what properly constitutes the essence of purity—elements are pure when they have received no change which would affect the simplicity of their nature. Light is pure when it is obscured by no cloud. Faith is pure when it is submissive to all revealed truths, without any

mixture of error. Charity is pure when it is attached to God, without any division of its love. This purity of heart admits no thought or desire which could wound the delicacy of grace. The least criminal attachment, the smallest vice established in the soul, is sufficient to destroy it.

JANUARY 29.

ON THE MEANS OF ACQUIRING PURITY OF
HEART.

I. *Those means are an extreme vigilance over ourselves.*

“My son,” said the wise man, “guard your heart with all possible care, because from it proceeds life.” And what life? The life of grace. One single thought, one single desire, one look, one word contrary to the law of God, is able to take away from you this precious and supernatural life, which is preserved only by purity of heart. Be always, therefore, attentive both within and without. Close

all the avenues of your heart and all the doors of your senses to the enemy of your salvation, who endeavours to enter in. His poisonous breath is every where, and is always ready to infect you. Place, therefore, a bridle on your desires and a *gate upon your lips*, that your heart may not be profaned, either by the disorder of your thoughts, or the indecency and malice of your discourses.

II. *Constant recourse to the grace of God.*

Weak and frail man can never preserve purity of heart in the midst of the dangers of the world, if he be not continually aided and sustained by grace; he will fall, he will go astray every moment, if it do not come to his succour. He should, therefore, implore it; nothing should prevent him from raising up his heart to God to say to him: "Do not abandon me, O Lord, to my own weakness." Be always with me that you may enable me to preserve the purity of a heart which you

have created only for yourself, and which should belong to you alone.

JANUARY 30.

ON THE PURITY OF THE BODY.

I. A Christian should have a horror of all sins contrary to this virtue, because his body has become by baptism the temple of the Holy Ghost.

In Scripture, the creation of the world is specially attributed to the Father, the redemption to the Son, and the sanctification to the Holy Ghost, who is for this reason called "the Sanctifying Spirit." Thus, at the very moment a person is baptized, he is sanctified, and the Holy Ghost takes possession of his body and soul.—You have been washed and sanctified and justified in baptism, said St. Paul, by the virtue of the Holy Ghost. Now this consecration, though interior and hidden, is still more efficacious than the consecration of churches and altars, which we behold every day.—And if we

fear to profane those exterior temples, how much more should we not dread to place the idol of pleasure in a body where the Holy Ghost has taken up his abode !

II. *Because his body becomes by communion the Body of Jesus Christ himself.*

The union of our flesh with that of Jesus Christ, which takes place in this sacrament, is so perfect that it is impossible to conceive any thing more strict and intimate. "Shall I therefore take the members of Christ and make them the members of a harlot ?" asks St. Paul. You cannot, therefore, any longer profane your flesh without defiling, and at the same time, crucifying his flesh a second time.

JANUARY 31.

ON THE SEVERITY OF GOD'S JUDGMENT.

I. *Judge of it by these words of Jesus Christ, which relate to sins of thought :*
"You have heard that it hath been said to them of old : Thou shalt not commit

adultery ; but I say to you : Whosoever looks at a woman so as to lust after her, hath already committed adultery in his heart."

Thus a look, a thought, a desire, is sufficient to render us guilty of a grievous crime in the eyes of our Sovereign Judge. What, then, must it be to spend an entire life in the fixed and persevering habit of those frightful disorders, those abominable crimes, which make nature blush, and which bring trouble, disgrace, and desolation, on families ? What must it be to repeat those crimes perpetually, and multiply them beyond the hairs of our head ?

II. *Judge of it by those other words of Jesus Christ, which regard sins in word :* " You have heard that it has been said to them of old : Thou shalt not kill ; but I say to you, whosoever shall call his brother fool, shall be guilty of hell fire."

It is the Sovereign Judge who speaks and pronounces these decrees. Who shall

not fear, O Lord, the severity of thy justice? Thou wilt punish not only the barbarous and cruel act of the hand that is steeped in an enemy's blood, but also according to their degree of malice, injurious words, words of wrath and indignation, which have given pain to our neighbour.

FEBRUARY 1.

ON MURDER.

I. "*Thou shalt not kill,*" says the Lord.

This law prohibits all external murders, and consequently, 1st, Suicide, by which life is destroyed in order to put an end to suffering. 2d, Duels, in which those who provoke, authorize or approve of them, are included. 3d, Precipitation, neglect, or prejudice, in those trials which affect the life of man, and sometimes of many men together; such was the unjust decree by which Assuerus commanded the massacre of all the Jews at the instance of the cruel Aman. 4th, Wars, which are

enkindled only by ambition, or an unbridled desire of obtaining illegitimate power.

II. *This law equally prohibits internal murders which are committed in the heart.*

By desiring the death of an enemy who has offended or persecuted us—by desiring the death of a husband or wife whose conduct seems odious and insupportable to us—by wishing for the death of a parent (who would believe it possible?) whom we are too long waiting to succeed; for to what excess, O great God, will not the heart lead when covetousness prevails in it! And of what horrors is not that soul capable which thou abandonest, because thou dost abandon it!

FEBRUARY 2.

ON SWEARING.

I. *Swearing is forbidden by the law of God. "Swear not at all," says the Lord.*

Consider 1st, The oaths that are forbidden by this prohibition. It is certain

that it does not regard those oaths which lawful authority requires us to make, on proper occasions where the laws are to be supported. We then call God to witness the truth of our statements, either by lifting up our hand towards heaven, or by swearing on his holy Gospel, because we are authorized to do so by a power which comes from God. 2d, What God condemns, are unnecessary oaths in which God's name is taken in vain; imprecations and execrable blasphemies. How many are there, who from habit cannot open their lips without an oath, and who cannot utter the most simple truths without outraging the Divinity, and devoting themselves to death and eternal torments !

II. *These oaths cannot be justified by any pretext.*

Some pretend that they swear and blaspheme without thinking of it, or paying any attention to the meaning of their words—that they do so through levity

and habit, but by no means through irreverence. Those are wicked excuses. If it be evil to commit them, it is greater evil to make a habit of committing them. Such a habit as this, always indicates little respect for religion—little regard for the Majesty of the Most High who fills the universe by the immensity of his presence—a senseless disorder in conversation, which can only be the effect of a depraved heart and spirit.

FEBRUARY 3.

ON HUNGER AND THIRST AFTER JUSTICE.

I. *Every Christian should hunger and thirst after justice.*

That is, he should have not less eagerness and ardour for the gifts of grace than a hungry and thirsty man has for the nourishment of the body. The gifts of heaven which sanctify him, the virtues which render him agreeable to God, are always the principal object of his desires. With them he is occupied, them he seeks,

for them he hungers and thirsts. It frequently happens that those, who desire the goods of the body with the greatest ardour, fail to obtain them ; but, when we sincerely seek the goods of grace, we are sure to find them ; when we ask them with a lively faith, we are sure to obtain them, and we experience the truth of that saying of Jesus Christ, " Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall be filled."

II. *It is by this spiritual hunger and thirst, we ought to judge of the state of our conscience.*

Am I solely occupied with the desire of my salvation ? Do I really hunger and thirst after justice ? Can I say to God with the same truth as the prophet, " I thirst after you, O Lord ! as the wearied stag thirsts after the fountain of water ?" As a disrelish for food makes us fear for the health of the body, so our soul is in danger of losing sanctity and justice if it cease to desire them.

FEBRUARY 4.

ON THE EYE THAT SCANDALIZES.

I. *By the eye, that scandalizes, is meant every occasion that leads into sin.*

If you seek for this occasion you will fall by your own weakness, which is already too great, but which becomes still greater by the danger of the occasion. Eve violated the command of the Lord, because she approached the tree, because she entered into conversation with the serpent. The seduction of discourse joined to the presence of the object, easily triumphs over weak and wavering virtue.

II. *You will fall, from being deprived of the graces of God.*

If it be the order and will of God, if it be the duties of your state that place you in the occasion of sin, you act with confidence, because the Lord is with you. But if you seek it yourself, if you are placed in it by choice and passion, do not expect that God will accompany you, or

be near you. He will withdraw that all-powerful hand, without which, you cannot support yourself, and you will fall into the abyss.

FEBRUARY 5.

ON SEEKING VOLUNTARILY THE IMMEDIATE
OCCASION OF SIN.

I. *Every immediate occasion of sin is not voluntary.*

There are some which one meets without seeking them, by chance ; such was that in which the chaste Susanna was once exposed, when she bathed in her father's garden. She was not thinking of it, when all on a sudden she found herself in the occasion of committing a crime which she held in abhorrence, the very idea of which was sufficient to make her virtue tremble. There are others to which one is exposed by the duties of his state, by the necessities of habitual intercourse with men. Can one live in the world, and above all in the great world,

without meeting there those rocks of scandal, those unfortunate occasions of offending God ?

II. *The immediate occasions of sin which we voluntarily seek, is a sin in itself.*

This is an indubitable principle of Christian morality, in reference to which, you have two dangers to avoid. The first is, to persuade yourself falsely that the immediate occasion of sin which you voluntarily seek is a necessary and inevitable occasion. The second is, to imagine that an immediate, is only a remote occasion. Our conscience often tells us as Christ did St. Peter when he said to him : "Thou wilt deny me thrice." You will fall in such and such an occasion. And we answer with that blind presumption which was so fatal to the prince of the Apostles : No, there is nothing to fear. I will not deny thee.

FEBRUARY 6.

ON TWO SORTS OF IMMEDIATE OCCASIONS.

I. *Those that are dangerous for every one :*

Because they bring us so near to crime, and place us in such danger of committing it, that we cannot avoid it without a particular grace from God, and an extraordinary effort on our part.—It is then we are obliged to shun and avoid the occasion. “He that loves the danger will perish therein.” Observe that he does not say: He that is found in danger will perish, but he that loves and seeks it; because there are some dangers necessary and inevitable, dangers connected with our state, over which, without having it in our power to fly from them, we may triumph by the assistance of grace.

II. *Those which are dangerous only to us, and in reference to our personal dispositions, particular inclinations, our characters and habits.*

Such an occasion will not be an immediate occasion for others, but it will be so for us. Do not therefore say, "why is such a thing forbidden to me more than to so many others who make no scruple of it, and who are considered persons of piety?" It may be replied to you, that you know by experience that such an occasion is sufficient to make you lose grace, that you have always yielded to it; and that, therefore, you should avoid it.

FEBRUARY 7.

ON AVOIDING THE IMMEDIATE OCCASIONS OF SIN.

I. *Danger of those occasions.*

1st, They are so connected with sin that we should look upon them as sin itself. To encounter them, therefore, is in some measure to consent to the loss of your soul.

2d, They not only make us commit sin, but they make it become a habit, because

they destroy in a moment the resolutions we have formed, and the promises we have made to God, to renounce sin. You have come from the tribunal of penance ; you believe that you have been reconciled with God, you have promised not to offend him again. But if you seek the immediate occasion of sin, although you might avoid it, your resolutions and promises will be speedily forgotten.

II. *Advantage of flying from those occasions.*

It banishes sin from our heart ; it preserves us in the grace of God. It insures our reconciliation with him, and the sincerity of our penance. Is there any connection, any society, any reading, any charm of conversation which we should not sacrifice to such great advantages ? Fly from sin, said the wise man, and consequently from the occasion which will induce you to commit it, as venomous serpents whose bite is mortal. We fly

from them, and abhor them, although they may be concealed under flowers.

FEBRUARY 8.

ON THE OBLIGATION OF AVOIDING THE IMMEDIATE OCCASION OF SIN.

I. *This obligation is indispensable.*

Could Jesus Christ have given us this more clearly to understand than when he said: "If your right eye be to you an occasion of scandal, pluck it out, and cast it away from you: and if your right hand scandalize you, cut it off and cast it away from you?" The reason which he gives is decisive and evident. It is "because it is better for you to be deprived of one of your members than be cast into hell." You must then either part with this eye or hand that scandalizes you, and which is to you an occasion of falling, or you must resolve to be precipitated into hell. Ought you hesitate for a moment? And, moreover, every time that eternal punishment is annexed to the infraction of a

precept, is it not evident, that the obligation which it imposes is indispensable ?

II. *This obligation cannot be eluded by any pretext.*

This is what you should conclude from these words of Jesus Christ:—"If your eye or your hand scandalize you, pluck out the one, cut off the other, and cast it away from you." For this precept is undoubtedly not to be literally understood: Jesus Christ does not oblige us to an exterior mutilation which would be contrary to his law. What, then, is the real meaning of these words? It is this: Those objects which are to you an immediate occasion of sin, cannot be more dear, more precious, or more useful than a hand or an eye; nevertheless you must separate from them, no matter what it costs your self-love.

FEBRUARY 9.

ON THE ILLUSION OF THOSE PRETEXTS BY WHICH WE JUSTIFY OURSELVES FOR NOT WITHDRAWING FROM THE OCCASION OF SINS.

I. *They are interested pretexts.*

What! must I renounce for ever a commerce that is useful and advantageous, nay, that seems absolutely necessary for the increase or establishment of my fortune? Vain pretext! Nothing can be more precious, or more necessary, than the salvation of your soul. Am I then obliged to wound the feelings of persons who have rendered me essential services, and to whom the laws of probity and honour, which are as sacred as those of religion, oblige me to be eternally grateful? Manifest illusion! There is not, and there cannot be, any gratitude which would bind you, at the expense of your salvation.

II. *Pretexts of propriety.*

This change, this separation will afford a subject of conversation to the world. Frivolous pretext ! If the connexions have been public and scandalous, the scandal cannot be better repaired than by a public separation ; if they have not been public, how can the world talk about what it knows nothing of ? But I have promised and kept my word, that there should be nothing criminal for the future in this connexion. Foolish pretence ! As long as the same occasion shall be presented, so long shall the same disorder continue.

FEBRUARY 10.

ON THE HAPPINESS OF THE JUST.

I. *This happiness of the just does not consist in an exemption from the sufferings and inconveniencies of life.*

Because, 1st, Experience teaches us that they sometimes endure as much and even more than sinners. 2d, Because we see them every day included with sinners

in public calamities, such as plagues, famine, and war, conflagrations and shipwreck. 3d, Jesus Christ, so far from assuring them that they shall be exempt from suffering in this life, tells them on the contrary that they shall pass their life in suffering. "You will weep and be afflicted," said he to his disciples, "but the world shall rejoice."

II. *In what, then, does the happiness of the just consist?*

In this: 1st. That God gives them a strength and courage proportioned to the magnitude of the evils which they have to endure. 2d, In their being supported and cheered by the hope of a happy time to come. Hence Jesus Christ added: "But your sorrow shall be changed into joy." Their present happiness is, therefore, founded on their future consolation. Without being exempt from pain or affliction, they are truly happy, because, sustained by Christian hope, they look upon their afflictions as a pledge of that

bliss which is promised them according to this sentence: "Blessed are they who weep, for they shall be comforted." We forget, or rather we disown, in some manner, those great truths, every time that we complain or murmur in our sufferings.

FEBRUARY 11.

ON THE SENTIMENTS WHICH A CHRISTIAN SHOULD ENTERTAIN WITH REGARD TO THE RICHES AND GRANDEUR OF THE WORLD.

I. *He should not esteem them for their own sake.*

This would be to judge of them like worldlings, who look upon those that possess these frivolous advantages as privileged souls. It is this prejudice that makes such a number of the great imagine that they are a kind of divinities, before whom, other men should fall down and adore. False and pernicious notion! which has caused in every age the misery of the human race, and which is no less contrary to the lights of reason than to

the principles of religion, and the true sentiments of nature.

II. *A Christian esteems the riches and grandeur of the world only by the good use that is made of them.*

He does not look upon a poor man as the outcast of heaven, because he is the outcast of the world ; he does not judge of the difference of conditions by their apparent display, but by their use. Poverty, sanctified by virtue, appears infinitely preferable in his eyes to riches that are abused ; and he does not consider a man worthy of his esteem for having been born great, or for being in grandeur or wealth, unless he usefully employ them for the good of mankind, and his own salvation.

FEBRUARY 12.

ON THE AFFAIR OF SALVATION.

I. *It is the most essential and important that we can have in this world.*

Everything else passes away ; every-

thing else has an end: our life itself is only a dream, which must disappear at the first dawn of the day of eternity. Every moment that passes brings us nearer to it, and conducts us to the gates either of heaven or hell. On the one side we are attracted by the most magnificent promises, and the most glorious hopes; we are terrified on the other by the most frightful threats. What is more worthy of our cares and our reflections, than a happy or miserable eternity? "What will it profit a man," says the Saviour, "to gain the whole world, if he lose his own soul?" Is this made the subject of reflection? Have I hitherto meditated upon it in the manner that an affair of such important consequences deserves?

II. *The affair of salvation is one of all others the most neglected.*

We are seriously occupied with the affairs of the world; we labour, we disquiet and trouble ourselves to make *them*

succeed; we continually think and speak of them, and we forget and neglect the affair of salvation. Ah! if we were to weigh in a just balance the goods of the present and those of a future life, how we should blush for thus misplacing all our cares and labours—for employing all our strength of mind and body to acquire those goods which death will tear from us for ever, without taking any trouble to obtain that better portion, that celestial inheritance that can never be taken away!

FEBRUARY 13.

ON THE AFFAIRS OF THE WORLD COMPARED
WITH THOSE OF SALVATION.

I. *The greatest affairs of the world seem mean and contemptible when compared with those of salvation.*

There are objects which arrest our notice when we consider them separately; but which are hardly perceived when viewed with others of greater magnitude: the longest duration of time when com-

pared with that of eternity, appears but an instant. The whole earth seems but an atom when compared with the vast firmament by which it is surrounded. Thus all human enterprises are nothing, when compared with our salvation. Those affairs, so great and so considerable, seem only as children's play which deserve not our attention, only inasmuch as our duty, or the salvation of our soul, may be connected with them.

II. *We can more easily succeed in the affairs of our salvation than in those of the world.*

An infinity of unforeseen and unavoidable circumstances disconcerts our projects; a thousand contradictions which spring from the passions of men, oppose themselves to the execution of our designs. The evils which we dread, befall us, and the goods which we desire, escape us. The affair of salvation alone is treated solely between God and man: God, who attracts him by his grace and

who rewards even his desires ; and man, who has it always in his power to follow the attractions of this grace in order to devote himself to God. "When I desire to be rich," said St. Augustine, "I still have to mourn in poverty ; when I wish to be exalted, my ambition does not prevent me from being humbled in the dust. But to possess you for ever, O my God ! I have only to wish it sincerely, and to ask it humbly, and there is no doubt of my attaining my desire."

FEBRUARY 14.

ON TWO RULES WHICH A CHRISTIAN SHOULD
OBSERVE TO WORK OUT HIS SALVATION IN
THE WORLD.

I. *The first is, to prefer the care of his salvation to that of worldly cares, when those two cares are incompatible.*

If an affair proposed to you be incompatible with the care of your salvation ; if it prevents you from attending to it ; if you cannot undertake or embark in it

without committing frauds and injustice, violence and cruelty, no matter how advantageous it may be, you must renounce it. To engage or participate in such an affair would be to prefer the world to God, the advantages of the world to those of eternity, and the interests of earth to the salvation of your soul.

II. The second is, to refer all your worldly cares to your salvation.

In order to labour efficaciously for our salvation, must we renounce altogether our worldly cares? By no means: because the very care of your salvation obliges you not to neglect those that are annexed to your condition. You should then apply yourself to them, and this very application, if referred to God, will be conducive to your salvation. If in all your actions you seek only to obey and to please him, your various labours will have but the same end, and will be inseparably connected with the affairs of your salvation.

FEBRUARY 15.

ON THE ACTIONS THAT ARE PECULIAR TO
CHRISTIAN CHARITY.

I. *Some are interior.*

The interior acts of Christian charity are, 1st, A sincere joy at the happiness and prosperity of our neighbour, and a real sorrow for his sufferings and afflictions. 2d, A strong disposition to give the most favourable interpretation to his words and actions, at least when they are not plainly culpable. 3d, A prompt inclination to bear with his defects, and to be reconciled to him when he has offended us. 4th, In fine, so great an affection, that we would be ready, when circumstances may require it, to lay down our lives for our brethren, and to sacrifice ourselves for their salvation.

II. *Others are exterior.*

The exterior acts are an habitual mildness and complaisance in our intercourse with others, except when this complai-

sance, when carried to excess, would become culpable. 2d, An extreme discretion in our language, in order to preserve as much as possible the reputation of our brethren. 3d, A ready and generous liberality, which spares nothing to comfort and relieve him in his afflictions. Such is the new commandment which Jesus Christ has given in his gospel. Such are the marks by which he has said we may be known to be his disciples.

FEBRUARY 16.

ON SINS OF HABIT CONSIDERED IN THEIR
ORIGIN.

I. *They take their rise from trifling faults which we do not scruple.*

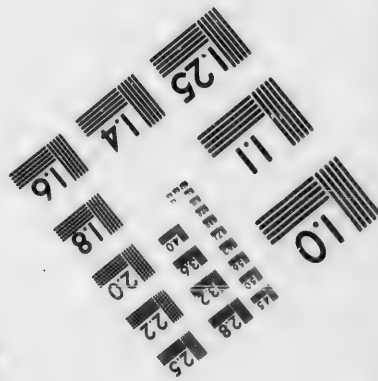
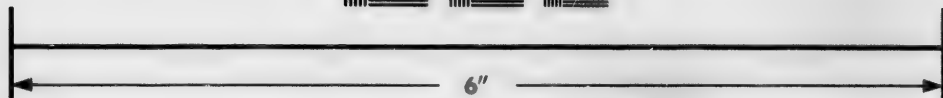
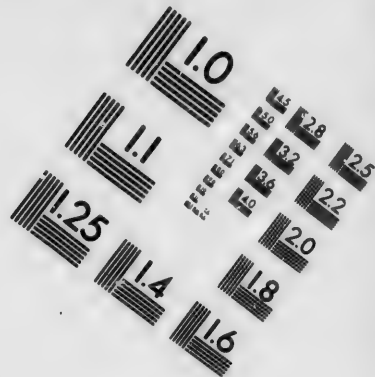
A person has been educated in sentiments of piety; he has preserved for some time the grace and innocence of his baptism, nay, the very shadow of sin that would destroy them was horrible in his sight. He feared to commit such sins; he would not dare even to think of them.

But what happens? He first begins by suffering himself to commit trivial faults; he no longer fears so much to wander from the strict paths of justice. He does not yet like to quit him, nor to lose sight of them altogether; but he accustoms himself to stray from them because these wanderings do not seem great. Behold what may be called the infancy and origin of habitual sins, of those frightful vices that lead to final impenitence, and that make us lose the grace of God without recovery!

II. *Those small faults, when multiplied, insensibly lead to great crimes.*

No one suddenly arrives at the height of iniquity; we ascend to it by degrees. We rise after our first falls, but we relapse again; and these relapses become every day more frequent. By those means we grow more hardened every day, and become familiar with actions, the very thoughts of which would make us tremble in the days of our innocence. If you





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still possess this precious treasure, labour without ceasing to preserve it. If you have had the misfortune to lose it by sin, strive still more to recover it by penance. Banish for ever this sin from your heart. — If it happens to take root there, how difficult will it not be to destroy it !

FEBRUARY 17.

ON THE PROGRESS OF HABITUAL SINS.

I. *Grievous sins speedily pass into a habit.*

It requires no long time for its formation. One gets more easily accustomed to vice than to virtue. The latter combats all the inclinations of nature, whilst the former flatters them. The one meets with nothing but resistance from us ; the other experiences all kinds of facility. Should we, then, be astonished at the rapid progress in the career of vice which most men make in a few years ? “ Alas ! ” says St. Augustine, “ I was yet so young, and notwithstanding was already so great

a sinner." *Tantillus puer, et tantus peccator!*

II. *Force of this habit.*

It affords the sinner so great a facility of obeying its impulses that he cannot, without extreme difficulty, resist its impressions; and when it is deeply rooted, it becomes a ruling principle which exercises almost absolute power over all his actions: it is in some respect a new nature. It is obeyed without trouble, and almost without reflection. It is a tree which has been bent so long a time that it cannot be brought back to its original position without an extraordinary effort. "Can the Ethiopian," says the Scripture, "change his skin, or the leopard his spots? How, then, can you do good, you who have been accustomed to evil?"

FEBRUARY 18.

ON THE END OF HABITUAL SINS.

I. *They lead to hardness of heart.*

Conscience is silent—God abandons us

—remorses disappear.—Forgetfulness of God and of ourselves usurp the place of reason and shame. We come at length to be hardened in crime, even to love and applaud it in others, and to lose every idea and sentiment of virtue.

II. *This obduracy leads to final impenitence.*

And how could it be otherwise, since it makes us break up, in some manner, all connexion with God, renders us deaf to the invitations of his grace, in the supposition that he still deigns to bestow on us a look of pity, and that he has not punished this frightful series of crimes and disorders? The evil should have been arrested in its beginning, and not suffered time to take root. *Principiis obsta.* The enemy should have been combatted whilst he was still weak, and not allowed to become so strong and so powerful as to seem invincible, without a miracle of grace.

FEBRUARY 19.

ON THE STATE OF A SOUL WHICH STILL PRESERVES THE GRACE OF BAPTISM.

I. It should fear to lose this grace.

It requires but a thought, a desire, a look, a word contrary to the law of God, to deprive us of so precious a blessing. We carry it, said St. Paul, in frail vessels. Sin presents itself on all sides to our hearts, and assumes various forms for the purpose of seducing us. You should, therefore, always watch, and always fear.

II. It is difficult to repair this loss.

1st, Innocence, once lost, is never perfectly recovered. You may be a penitent, but this quality proves that you have ceased to be just; the wound is healed, but the scar remains. 2d, It rarely happens that a sin, once committed, is not soon followed by another. It would be an illusion to imagine that we could prescribe to ourselves bounds in evil, and

commit sin, if I may use the expression, by weight and measure. What man is master of his passions to such a degree, as to be able to say to them: "Thus far shall you go, but no farther?" We become their slave when we yield to them in one point, and the more so because we are no longer in a condition to command them.

FEBRUARY 20.

ON THE SIN OF SCANDAL.

I. *Considered in its own nature.*

"It is necessary," says the Saviour, "that there be scandals, but wo to him by whom scandal cometh! Because, 1st, He commits a sin directly opposed to the redemption of Jesus Christ; because he destroys those souls which God, our Saviour, has redeemed by his blood. 2d, He becomes, in some manner, the supporter, the organ, and the minister of the devil, who has been from the beginning the enemy and the murderer of our souls.

Observe, that in order to commit this sin, it is by no means necessary to have a formal and premeditated design of perverting souls. It is sufficient if we perceive that our words or our actions have a tendency to estrange him from the way of salvation. If you are not prevented by this motive, you are charged before God with all the horror and iniquity of the sin of scandal.

II. *Considered in its effects.*

It renders you responsible for all the sins of which it is the cause, because they would not have been committed but for the scandal which you have given. Who can conceive the number of such sins? Who can discover all the extent of this fatal propagation of iniquity which is sometimes transmitted to future generations, to the remotest posterity?

FEBRUARY 21.

ON THE SIN OF SCANDAL IN THOSE WHO ARE
SPECIALLY BOUND TO EDIFY THEIR NEIGH-
BOUR BY GOOD EXAMPLE.

I. *They sin more grievously than others.*

Thus, a public man, placed in a dignified station, and whose rank and condition continually expose him to the eyes of the world, sins more grievously than a private individual, by his bad conduct, because its impression is more forcible, and its effects more extensive. A father or a mother who inspire their children with a contempt for religion and its holy practices—a master who renders his domestics the accomplices or witnesses of his disorders, are more culpable than others, by the scandal of their words and actions, because they employ for the destruction of souls a power which God has given them only for their edification.

II. *They are obliged to expiate their sin by a more public reparation.*

Secret sins may be expiated by secret penance ; but when they have been public and scandalous, they cannot be repaired except by a public and open repentance. You must teach those whom you have perverted by your bad example, to repent for their sins, as they have learned to commit them from you. Alas ! all those who have followed you in your wanderings will not follow you in your repentance. We can find imitators and disciples in vice, more easily than in virtue, and you will always have reason to weep bitterly over the scandal: whose reparation cannot be entirely perfect.

FEBRUARY 22.

ON THE TOO GREAT FACILITY OF TAKING
SCANDAL.

I. *We should never avail ourselves of the scandal that may be given us, for the purpose of imitating it.*

None but souls that are weak, and not firmly strengthened in virtue, will seek

for opportunities of justifying themselves by the scandals which they see in the world. A true and faithful Christian will be guided solely by the law of God and the maxims of the gospel. Everything that departs from these is worthy of condemnation in his eyes, and he renounces it. He does not confine himself to the example ; he consults only the rule, and if he bestows any attention on the wanderings of sinners, it is always for the purpose of lamenting, but never of imitating them.

II. *We should not too easily be scandalized by the conduct of others for the purpose of condemning them.*

Avoid, therefore, that excess of critical piety and chagrin, which is scandalized at everything. Do not judge your brethren without necessity, and do not seek to magnify the wickedness of their faults, which may happen through frailty, and which are not always the effect of their malice. Above all, take care not to dis-

cover the mote in your brother's eye, whilst you cannot see the beam in your own.

FEBRUARY 23.

ON THE SCANDALS THAT ARE SOMETIMES GIVEN BY PERSONS CONSECRATED TO GOD.

I. *They should not weaken our respect for religion.*

It is true, that "the concupiscence of the eyes, the concupiscence of the flesh, and the pride of life," sometimes penetrate even into the holy place: human passions, if not subdued, will soon corrupt the salt of the earth, and plunge in the darkness of sin those who ought to be the light of the world. The impious rejoice at this, and conclude from it that piety is only a deceitful mask, and religion a chimera. The true Christian makes a different judgment. He distinguished between what comes from God, and what proceeds from man. He knows that from man often proceed weakness

and disorder, and that what comes from God is always pure, always holy, and always worthy of reverence.

II. *The sight of those deplorable effects of human frailty should inspire us with a salutary fear.*

The true Christian says to himself: "If men specially consecrated to God are subject to such weaknesses; (*ecce qui serviunt ei non sunt stabiles*;) if he perceived iniquity even in his angels, (*et in angelis suis reperit pravitatem*;) what have I not to fear for my salvation, I, whose weak virtue is exposed in the midst of the world to so many various perils and temptations?"

FEBRUARY 24.

ON THE EDIFICATION OF OUR NEIGHBOUR.

I. *It is a duty directly opposed to the sin of scandal.*

We owe edification to all mankind, because a Christian is bound to edify his neighbour by good works, and by the

constant, regular, and uniform practice of all Christian virtues. It is by this means they become the light of the world ; it is thus the precept of Jesus Christ is accomplished : " Let your light shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

II. *We should fear to lose by vain-glory the merit of edification.*

" Take care," says the Saviour, " not to do your good works before men, in order to be seen by them, for if you propose to yourself such an end, you will lose all the merit of them." There are even certain particular works, to perform which you may be inspired by grace, and yet you should conceal them from the sight of men, lest your self-love may be too flattered by the praise which springs from them, and thus this frivolous and perishable glory should be your only reward. " Let your alms be in secret." There are, then, works which you should show to men, by the obligation of edifying them,

and others which it is right to conceal, through the fear of losing or injuring ourselves by vain-glory.

FEBRUARY 25.

ON RENOUNCING THE WORLD.

I. *There is a world which every Christian is bound to renounce.*

It is this world for which Jesus Christ would not pray. *Non pro mundo rogo.* It is this world of which Satan is the master and the sovereign. *Princeps hujus mundi.* It is not difficult to know it. Wherever ambition, avarice, impiety, effeminacy and pleasure prevail, there it is to be found. Behold the world which every Christian is bound to renounce: 1st, By the obligations of his baptism. 2d, By the precept in the epistle of St. John: *Nolite diligere mundum.* "Do not love the world."

II. *The manner in which a person living in the world may fulfil this obligation.*

It is certain that a person may renounce

the world without retiring into solitude. The Apostle St. John does not command us to quit the world, but he forbids us to love it. We therefore fulfil this obligation by leading a life different from that of worldlings, by detesting from our whole heart their vices, their false maxims, their errors and prejudices. Joseph fulfilled this duty in the court of Pharaoh, by faithfully serving the God of Jacob, in the midst of an idolatrous people ; and Esther, in the court of Assuerus, when she said : *Tu scis necessitatem meam.* I lament, O my God, the necessity which obliges me to live in the midst of a world that does not cease to offend you.

FEBRUARY 26.

ON DETACHMENT FROM THE GOODS OF THIS
WORLD.

I. *It is necessary for our salvation ; we cannot serve two masters together.*

Consequently, if one be attached to the goods of this world, he is no longer attach-

ed to God : for here there is no question of an exterior service, but of an interior service of attachment and affection. The just man, whilst he appears to act and labour for the goods of this world, is only serving God : he acts and labours only to please him. The sinner, on the contrary, who is attached solely to the goods of this world, labours and acts only to obtain them. He is, therefore, no longer attached to God, and henceforth he loses himself, he wanders, he renounces his own salvation.

II. *This detachment is necessary for our peace.*

What is it, that brings trouble and desolation into the bosom of worldlings ? The loss and privation of the goods of this world.—They are never contented, never satisfied, because their desires are never sufficiently gratified, and when they speak to you in confidence, they will entertain you only with their misfortunes, their inquietudes, and their mortifications.

Happy, on the contrary, is the soul that is entirely detached from the false goods of this world ! It bears their privation without sorrow, and their loss without regret, because it still possesseth its God, and because God is the centre of all its desires, and the only object of its attachment.

FEBRUARY 27.

ON THE FALSE DESIRES OF SALVATION.

I. Some are vague and indefinite desires which produce no effect.

We will easily say : " I wish to work out my salvation. It is time to think of it. I desire to attend seriously to the one thing necessary." But we will not say : " I should, therefore, this day, begin to regulate my affairs with more order. I should fix a time for prayer, a time for labour, and for all the other duties. I should profit of such or such an occasion to sanctify my life by good works. I should for ever renounce this sin. I should labour to root out this vicious habit."

We desire our salvation in a general way, without wishing to adopt the necessary and special means to obtain it.

II. *Others are desires limited in the choice of those means which we adopt for our salvation.*

Those means are very extensive, for they consist, 1st, In the practice of all our duties. 2d, In the union of all Christian virtues. 3d, In the flight from all sins and vices. Now, how do the greater part of mankind act? In order to ensure their salvation they apply to those duties only which give them least trouble, which are most suited to their character and humour, and they dispense themselves from others. They do not reflect, that an imperfect obedience to the law of God will not render us worthy of heaven; because one exception to that law will make us unworthy of eternal bliss.

FEBRUARY 28.

ON SELF-LOVE.

I. *It makes us attentive and clear-sighted where the faults of others are concerned.*

1st, Attentive. We never confine ourselves to the praiseworthy qualities which they may have. We are engaged only in observing their defects, and to discover them we will spare no labour nor pains. We wish to know everything that is reprehensible in their conduct, because we imagine that everything which may blacken their reputation is as it were a shade, which will serve to increase the brightness of our own.

2d, Clear-sighted. We never fail in penetration when we want to discover the faults of others. Our self-love is a skilful master which will not suffer us to be ignorant of anything that may turn to its own account. But this attention, this malicious application to the faults of our neighbour, is a sin against charity, which

furnishes continual food for our calumnies, and which constantly induces us to excite and sanction the calumnies of others.

II. Self-love makes us blind to our own faults.

And this blindness goes to the extent even of our blaming others for the very faults and excesses of which ourselves are guilty every day. You will hear a miser declaim against avarice, and a squanderer cry out against useless expenses. *Attende tibi.* Ah! think of yourself, reflect on yourself, and beseech the Lord to make you as attentive and enlightened on your own faults as the malice of self-love is on the faults of others.

FEBRUARY 29.

ON THE SEVERITY OF OUR JUDGMENTS WITH REGARD TO OUR NEIGHBOUR.

I. We often judge him with too much severity.

We use almost every day two weights

and measures: one for our neighbour, and the other for ourselves. If he is to be condemned, we are inexorable to his smallest faults. Our natural malignity blinds us, and does not suffer us to reflect, that in judging our brother with so much severity, we prepare for ourselves a rigorous judgment, which will be much more terrible for us than ours is for him, since Jesus Christ has said: "You will be judged as you will have judged others."

II. *We judge ourselves with too much indulgence.*

1st, Because we are ignorant of our faults, and instead of listening to the voice of our conscience, which would reproach us for them, we attend only to our self-love, which conceals them. 2d, Because if we cannot avoid knowing them, we never want false pretexts to exalt them to virtues. The miser persuades himself that he does not transgress the bounds of wise economy, and the squanderer fancies that he deserves the praise

of a noble and generous soul. Let us be always on our guard against illusions that are so common and so dangerous, and let us beg the Lord to dispel them by the light of his grace.

MARCH 1.

ON THE INORDINATE LOVE OF OURSELVES.

I. *It is natural to love one's self.*

God does not forbid it, because it is a sentiment which he has himself imprinted on our heart. But we should regulate this love. He who loves himself only for the present life, is his own enemy. He seems occupied only with his own happiness, interests, pleasures, and amusements, but he wanders every moment from the true centre of his bliss. He becomes himself the author and the instrument of his own ruin; he digs with his own hands the frightful precipice in which he will be plunged and tormented for ever. Could the most furious and envenomed hatred, desire, or cause him to suffer in

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this world, evils at all comparable to those which he prepares for himself in the next ?

II. *The true Christian loves himself only for the life to come.*

He is constantly at war with himself to combat his evil inclinations. He restrains and mortifies himself in order to observe the law of God. He embraces with ardour everything that it prescribes, and denies himself everything which it forbids. What fury, say worldlings, what an incomprehensible hatred of one's self it must be, that could induce a man to subject himself to such restraint ! Their surprise is a mark of their blindness. They do not see, that this just man who labours for future happiness, understands his true interests much better than those who love themselves only for the present time.

MARCH 2.

ON THE LOVE OF LIFE.

I. *A Christian is allowed to attend to the preservation of his life.*

He is even obliged to do so, since he has received it from God, to employ it for his service and his glory, until whatever time he is pleased to put an end to it by the accidents which he will have permitted or ordained, in the counsels of his wisdom. Do not, therefore, doubt but he will one day condemn and severely punish those who make no scruple of considerably injuring their health, and shortening their days, to prolong, to vary, or to multiply their pleasures.

II. *A Christian is not permitted to love his life for the purpose of satisfying his passions.*

You love life for its own sake, and without any reference to God who has given it to you. You love it on account of the pleasures which you enjoy. You love it because you know no other pleasure but that of your senses. You love it, and this love stifles in your heart the sentiments of faith, the desire and hope of eternal life. Your love for life in all

these cases is excessive and inordinate. It prevents you from desiring the goods of a future life, and you thereby become unworthy of possessing them.

MARCH 3.

ON THE FEAR OF DEATH.

I. *A Christian has great reason to fear death.*

Not with that shameful, weak, and dishonourable fear which makes a man tremble with timidity, whilst his life is in danger; this would be a weakness unworthy of a Christian: but with that reasonable and reflecting fear which contemplates death in reference to the eternity to which it leads us—a fear which is not incompatible with courage, because it is always subject to the empire of religion and duty. Now, this fear of death is founded on the just severity of the judgment of God, which will immediately follow it, and which will decide our lot for eternity. “Lord,” said the Royal Pro-

phet, "if thou enterest into judgment with thy servant, who can be justified before thee? Who can withstand the inquiries of thy justice?"

II. *The use of this fear.*

It should not render us timid and irresolute whenever we are bound to lay down our life or expose it to danger. It should serve only to make us live well. For if death is really to be feared only because it is followed by so terrible a judgment, what should I not do whilst I am still on earth, to sanctify all the days of my life, to expiate my sins, and to appease the wrath of the Sovereign Judge?

MARCH 4.

ON THE DESIRE OF DEATH.

I. *A Christian can desire death, in order to be more speedily with God, in order not to be any longer in danger of losing his grace, and that he may be fixed in an immovable state of justice and sanctity.*

He can desire it when he reflects that

"here we have no lasting city," when he looks on heaven as his true country, and the earth as a place of exile. This is what made the prophet say: "Woe is me that my sojournment is prolonged!" and St. Paul: "Who will deliver me from this body of death?"

II. *This desire is contrary to the spirit of Christianity.*

When it is founded only on the disgust and impatience which we experience, 1st, From the privation of worldly goods. 2d, From the untoward events which frustrate our hopes, and mar the projects of our ambition. 3d, From the uneasiness and bitterness which we feel from the severity of our superiors, or the malice of our equals. 4th, From a weariness of life, which seizes us when God is pleased to send us an accumulation of crosses. 5th, From too lively and too human sorrows which pervade our souls, and impede all their motions at the death of persons who are dear to us.

MARCH 5.

ON THE CONTEMPT OF LIFE.

I. *A true Christian ought to despise life, because he is the disciple of Jesus Christ.*

He is given to Christ at his Baptism. He is bound to hear him as his master, to follow him as his model, to imitate his sentiments, whilst his condition does not permit him to imitate him in his very actions. *Hoc sentite in vobis quod et in Christo Jesu.* Now, how has this divine Saviour treated his life? Has he not sacrificed it? Has he not squandered it for our salvation? When his hour was come, did he hesitate for a moment to resign his life? It could not be taken away from him; it was necessary that he himself should give it up. *Ego pono animam meam a meipso.* The duration of ours does not depend upon us. Shall we refuse to sacrifice it for a God who has sacrificed his for us? This is the sentiment with which we ought to be inspired by one look

at the image of our divine Saviour expiring on the cross.

II. *Because he hopes to follow Jesus Christ into his glory.*

This hope is one of the three fundamental virtues of Christianity. It is, therefore, not less necessary than faith and charity, and we are not true Christians if we do not possess it. But if we possess it, what should the present life appear to us in comparison with the future? "If any one love me, let him follow me," said the Saviour, "and where I will be, there also shall be my servant." We shall go, then, after death to reign in heaven with Jesus Christ; we shall share in the infinite and incomprehensible bliss of the Divinity. Should not such a hope be sufficient to make us despise a frail and perishable life, and to fix our heart and our desires as an immovable anchor on this eternal life which is promised us?

MARCH 6.

ON THE HABITUAL DISPOSITIONS WHICH CHRIST-
IANS SHOULD HAVE WITH REGARD TO THEIR
DEATH.

I. They can fear or desire it at certain moments, according to the different points of view from which they behold it.

Thus acted the saints, our masters and our models. Listen to St. Paul: "I am pressed on two sides," said he to the first faithful. "I desire to die in order to be with Jesus Christ, which is without comparison the better. But it is necessary for your good that I should still remain on the earth." You perceive that he is poised as if between the desire and the fear of death. He desires it in order "to be with Jesus Christ;" he fears it because he does not wish to abandon the care of the infant Church. On the one side he wished to quit life to go to God. On the other he consented to live for the salvation of his brethren.

II. *Our habitual disposition should be an entire submission to the will of God whether for life or death.*

Not only for death in itself, but for whatever kind of death he shall please to subject us to; not only for the manner of our death, but also for the time, the age, the day, and the moment, when he shall be pleased to summon us before him. Whether we live, or whether we die, said St. Paul, we are always the Lord's. None of us lives for himself, or dies for himself. When we live we belong to God, because we live for him in his grace; and when we die we are still his, because we die in the firm hope of reigning with him in glory.

MARCH 7.

ON UNEASINESS FOR THE FUTURE.

I. *There is a future for which we should not be disquieted.*

It is that which God disposes independently of us, and without any concurrence of our will. "What shall happen me?"

say worldlings every day. "Shall I be happy or miserable? All my days are reckoned; what will be their number?" &c. And in order to know this, they sometimes consult impostors, false prophets, who laugh at their credulity, and fill their minds with their foolish predictions. Observe, 1st, That he who endeavours to know the future by the sole light of human reason, interferes with the right of God, who has reserved this knowledge to himself, and who is determined to conceal it from us. 2d, That when we have recourse to superstitious operations, in order to discover the future, our curiosity is still more criminal. 3d, That if without seeking to know the future we are unreasonably anxious concerning it, we offend the Lord by a diffidence which is injurious to his goodness.

II. *There is a future of which we should continually think.*

It is that of which we least think, and concerning which we are least troubled.

It is that eternal future which must succeed the brief duration of our life. It is the only future which God commands us to foresee, and against which he desires us to be prepared. This future is certain; we cannot avoid it, but we can render it happy or miserable by the good or bad use of the present.

MARCH 8.

ON SUBMISSION TO THE WILL OF GOD.

I. *This submission is an indispensable duty.*

A subject ought to be submissive to the will of his sovereign; a servant to that of his master, and for a much stronger reason, a creature to that of his Creator. "O men!" cried out the apostle St. Paul, "who are you, to contend with God?" A vessel of clay says to him that made it: Why have you formed me thus? And are you not a thousand times more dependent on God than the vessel is on him who formed it?

II. *In this submission consists our happiness.*

Happy, indeed, is the man who submits in everything to the divine will, who abandons himself to Providence, who permits himself to be conducted by the wisdom of God, and who hopes for everything from his goodness ! Nothing opposes his desires, because he wishes for nothing but what God wills ; and everything happens according to his desires, because he wishes and sincerely approves everything that happens him. O happy peace ! O sweet tranquillity ! you are the portion and recompense of those faithful souls who repose, if I may say so, in the bosom of God, because they never have any other will but his.

MARCH 9.

ON THE PERSONAL APPLICATION OF THE GOSPEL
MAXIMS.

I. *We admire these maxims, but do not reduce them to practice.*

It is impossible to reflect on those great precepts : of the love of God, superior to every other love ; of the love of our neighbour, which is equal to that which we have for ourselves ; of the renunciation of all the pretensions of self-love, which raises man above the earth, and above all human interests, without admiring them. Who is there that would not be charmed by maxims so pure, so sublime, and so reasonable ? But what is the fruit of this admiration ? It does not render us more attentive to our duties, nor wean our hearts from the goods of this life.

II. *Cause of this disorder.*

This is in a great degree the cause, that whilst we admire the precepts and maxims of the gospel, we give ourselves no trouble to make a personal application of them ; that is, we do not apply them to our state, our inclinations, our faults, or our particular circumstances. We can say very well that nothing is more estimable than a true Christian ; but we rarely say—

"Am I a true Christian? and what ought I do to become one?" Hence, it comes to pass that we are Christians in speculation but not in practice.

MARCH 10.

ON THE SCIENCE OF SALVATION.

I. *It is called in Scripture, the science or knowledge of God.*

Because it teaches us to know God, that is, to know the most perfect and most complete of all beings—him in whom are concentrated all imaginable perfections, in the most eminent degree; perfections which far transcend all our ideas. If the knowledge of his smallest works appears worthy of occupying our minds, what should we not think of the knowledge of himself? O men! you believe yourselves accomplished when you have even an imperfect knowledge of a part of God's works, and you are ignorant of the science of salvation! You renounce the know-

ledge of this supreme and sovereign Being, who comprises in his divine essence, everything that could attract and satisfy your admiration.

II. *This knowledge is called in Scripture, the science of the saints.*

Because it teaches us the knowledge of our duties, and consequently the knowledge of piety, charity, and justice, which are the image of God. This knowledge of our duties is the peculiar act of conforming all our actions to the nature and will of God, and of imitating his divine perfections as far as human infirmity will permit. What can be more worthy of occupying all the attention of our spirit, and all the motions of our heart?

MARCH 11.

ON THE VANITY OF HUMAN SCIENCES.

I. *Know God : know your duties.*

This is the most necessary of all sciences ; all others are vain and frivolous, if

they have no reference to the science of salvation. "What will it profit a man," said the Saviour, "to gain the world if he lose his own soul?" May we not say with equal propriety—"what will it avail a man to know everything else, if he be ignorant of that knowledge which can alone conduct his soul to salvation? Those barren speculations, those sciences which have no relation to this only necessary one, of which we should never lose sight—those sciences which obtain for us at most but the vain smoke of glory, are in reality but a refined idleness, an ignorance which is contemptible, inasmuch as it is generally accompanied by too much pride and presumption.

II. *Human sciences become pernicious when they withdraw us from the science of salvation.*

That is, when they absolutely hinder us from thinking of it—when they have not even the remotest connexion with the duties of our state—when in order to ac-

quire them we squander that time which might be more usefully employed in fulfilling divine obligations—when we make them only an amusement indulged to excess, without any reasonable object, and consequently without fruit and merit—when we pursue them merely to gratify an unlimited vanity, an ill-regulated and unmeasured curiosity.

MARCH 12.

ON THE MEANS OF ACQUIRING THE KNOWLEDGE
OF GOD.

I. *The first is to consider Him as He is in himself.*

That is, as an infinite, immense, unchangeable Being, who fills the entire universe with the immensity of his presence, and who could equally fill a thousand worlds more vast and extensive than this, and who could create them if he pleased by one word,—a Being who peculiarly and essentially possesses all perfections,

—who alone is great—who alone is wise
—who alone is powerful—who alone is
immortal!—a Being who is wonderful in
his works, wonderful in the effects of his
justice and goodness—wonderful in his
saints, who are the works of his grace ;
—a Being who is at the same time the
God of might—the God of holiness—the
God of armies—the God of peace, and the
God of virtues ! O ! King of glory, who
is like unto you ? What a happiness for
me to know you ! and what a misfortune
if I be so blind as to know you without
fearing and loving you !

II. *The second is to consider Him in the
relation He bears to us.*

He is the author of our existence, the
principle and preserver of our being, our
sovereign, our judge, our refuge in dis-
grace, our consoler in affliction, our best
friend, or our most terrible enemy ; the
support of our life, and the foundation of
our hopes after our death ; the source of
our future bliss, our portion and our re-

compense in eternity. He, therefore, ought to be the object of all our thoughts, the centre of all our desires, and the end of all our actions.

MARCH 13.

ON THE MEANS OF ACQUIRING THE KNOWLEDGE
OF OUR DUTIES.

I. *The first is, to consult the law of God.*

This law speaks to us, and apprises us of our obligations.—David, in the midst of that prodigious multitude of affairs and external occupations, in which he was engaged almost every moment of his life, still found time to meditate on the law of the Lord. This divine law was always present to his spirit and his heart. After all, no matter what may be the number and variety of duties which it imposes upon us, if it be difficult to practise them, it is most easy to know them, for they are all contained in these two great precepts: “Love God above all things, and your

neighbour as yourself." All the law and the prophets are contained in these two commandments.

II. *The second method of knowing our duties is to consult our conscience.*

Conscience is a severe judge, whom you have within you, and who has established his tribunal in your heart. It is a guide that shows you the way of salvation—an exact censor who condemns all your wanderings—a faithful interpreter of the Angel whom God has given to conduct you. *Observe him, and hear his voice.* Ah! do not despise his advices, nor his reproaches; do not reject the light which God affords you; do not stifle this interior voice, which seems troublesome only to obstinate sinners—which brings back to God wandering souls, who have not lost all hope and all desire of their salvation.

MARCH 14.

ON REAL FELICITY.

I. *Happiness is our principal object and interest.*

We all wish to be happy; but we do not search for such happiness where it exists, and we believe that we can find it where it is not. For if you consider happiness in its own nature, you will perceive that it consists on the one side in an exemption from all evil, if possible, or at least from the greatest evils; and on the other, in the enjoyment, if it be possible, of all blessings, or at least of the greatest blessings. An exemption from the pains and inconveniencies of the body, constitutes, if you will, a part of happiness, but it is the smallest part. It is still more essential to happiness to be delivered from chagrins, and from the torments and inquietudes of the soul. Hence we behold so many poor who are happy in their indigence, because they enjoy this tran-

quillity ; and so many rich who are unhappy in their wealth, because they are a prey to cutting vexations, and cruel uneasiness.

II. *If you consider happiness with respect to its duration.*

It, undoubtedly, consists in being happy, not for a brief space of time, but for the longest possible time, and if it could, for ever. In one word, true and perfect happiness is that which resides in our soul, and which can never end. Now, this can be obtained for us by nothing but religion, since religion alone is employed in conducting us to that great felicity which will deliver us from the greatest evils, and which ensures to us for ever the possession of a good which is infinite both in its nature and duration.

MARCH 15.

ON THE HAPPINESS OF SINNERS COMPARED
WITH THAT OF THE JUST.

I. *The rich glutton lived in abundance and delights, and Lazarus was bent down by infirmities and misery.*

Behold the goods on one side, and the evils on the other; but if you consider these two men during their life, you will find that the condition of the rich man did not exempt him from the greatest evils, nor bestow him the greatest good, since he possessed nothing but exterior and fleeting goods, which could not deliver him from the torments of the heart. Lazarus, on the contrary, enjoyed the greatest goods, and was exempt from the greatest evils, for the goods which he enjoyed were interior and solid, whilst his evils were but exterior, and of brief duration.

II. *Consider the rich glutton and Lazarus after their death.*

You will behold the rich glutton "bu-

ried in hell," and Lazarus carried by angels "into the bosom of Abraham." The one suffers infinite and eternal evils; the other enjoys ineffable delights, which will never end. Which of the two understood true happiness?

MARCH 16.

ON THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE SOUL AND THE BODY.

1. *Our soul is a spiritual substance, which thinks, which reflects, which feels joy or sorrow, pleasure or pain.*

Our body is of itself nothing but a dead and inanimate substance. The soul alone is susceptible of life and sentiment.—When it is separated from the body, the latter is nothing but a heap of dust and ashes. We can, therefore, enjoy no felicity but in our soul, and we can be happy only through its means.—Now it is certain that the happiness of our soul does not consist in exterior goods, or in the pleasures of sense, for experience teaches

us that these are incapable of procuring perfect repose, interior and unchangeable tranquillity.

II. *Our soul is an immortal substance, and consequently capable of enjoying eternal felicity.*

Therefore, the greatest proof of wisdom is to suffer patiently the evils of this life, in order to escape the evils of the life to come, and to sacrifice, if necessary, the goods of this life, that we may ensure to our souls the possession of future goods. Hence, religion teaches us a maxim—that we should labour to avoid eternal torments with greater care than the brief and transitory afflictions of this life.

MARCH 17.

ON OUR PREDOMINANT PASSION.

I. *We should know our predominant passion, since it blinds us when we know it not.*

The study and knowledge of himself is not less essential to the formation of a

true Christian, than it was considered for the formation of a sage, by the principles of human philosophy. If you are ignorant of your predominant passion, you will fall into blindness. Though exact and scrupulous in the greater part of the law of God, there will be one point in which you will be guilty of culpable relaxation, and this article of God's law will be always directly contrary to the passion which rules you.

II. *We ought to subdue our predominant passion, since the blindness which it produces is culpable.*

First, because it is vicious in its principle, as it is the fruit of that fatal ascendancy which we unjustly give our predominant passion. Secondly, because the remedies for it are easy if we wish to use them. These remedies are to consult Moses, and the prophets, that is, those who by their office are interpreters of the law of God, and consequently our guides in the way of salvation—to apply to our-

selves the censure which we pass every day with so much light and discernment upon the conduct of others. "Physician, cure thyself."

MARCH 18.

ON THE MEANS OF KNOWING OUR PREDOMINANT PASSIONS.

I. *In order to know them we should attend to their number.*

For there are some who have many passions which successively domineer over them; and others who have only one passion by which they are continually occupied. Those who have many passions cannot be so easily blinded with regard to their state and condition, as those who have only one, because this multitude of passions by which they are enslaved, makes them commit so many sins that it is impossible for them not to perceive it.

II. *We should attend to the different characters which distinguish them.*

There are some so gross, and the causes of so many disorders in man, that he cannot but be aware of them. Could David and Solomon conceal from themselves the passion which tyrannized over them, and which made one shed the blood of the faithful Urias, and the other renounce the worship of the true God to adore idols? There are other passions whose disorders are less sensible, since they are in some manner concealed in the windings of the heart, such as jealousy, hatred, vanity, and sloth. These latter easily escape our observation; they deceive and blind us, inasmuch as they do not make us feel that we are their slaves.

MARCH 19.

ON CONSCIENCE.

I. *What is conscience?*

St. John Damascene says, "it is that interior law which God has written upon the hearts of all men, in order to instruct them." St. Basil says, "it is the secret

light of reason and religion which shows us the road we ought to take, and the path we should avoid." Conscience is to our soul what the eye is to our body, and Jesus Christ spoke of conscience when he said, "your eye is the lamp of your body; if your eye be simple, your entire body will be bright; but if your eye be evil, your whole body will be darksome." Take care, therefore, lest the light which is in you should be itself nothing but darkness.

II. *Conscience is always right of itself.*

It is a light, since it was given us by God, to conduct us.—We are so convinced of this, that we every day say to men when we believe they deceive us, or wish to impose on us, "I appeal to your conscience," always supposing that the judgment of conscience is equitable. But alas! it often happens that the lights of conscience are obscured by our passions. This is what has forced us to make a distinction between a good and bad conscience—between a right conscience,

which is that of the just, and a false conscience, which is that of sinners. Beseech God to purify the eye of your soul, and not to permit any passion to conceal from it the truth.

MARCH 20.

ON THE REPOSE OF CONSCIENCE.

I. *There is a repose of conscience which we ought to desire.*

It is that which consists in the advantageous testimony which our conscience bears us, that we walk in the ways of God, that we sincerely seek to please Him—that we are faithful in obeying Him, and always restrained by the fear of offending Him. This testimony is by no means incompatible with the sentiments of Christian humility. We know, that after having performed all that God commands us, we should still reckon ourselves useless servants. But at least, we are not then culpable servants, although it be even true to say, that we are always sin-

ners, and that God in rewarding our merits only crowns his own gifts.

II. *There is a repose of conscience which we ought to fear.*

It is that which arises from its blindness, either because it no longer scruples anything; which is the state of obdurate sinners; or, because it scruples certain sins, and is blind with regard to others, which is the state of the generality of sinners. Conscience is then silent, it makes us no reproach, but this silence is terrible, because it leads to impenitence.

MARCH 21.

ON THE BLINDNESS OF CONSCIENCE.

I. *This blindness is more general than we imagine.*

"There is," says the wise man, "a way which appears straight to man, but the ends thereof lead to death." All those who have some sentiments of religion, and some desire of salvation, do not destroy their souls by habits of great crimes. They

do not wish to imitate those who violate all the divine laws, without scruple or remorse. They, therefore, enter on a way which appears straight to them, because their conscience being blinded by the faults which they habitually commit, conceals the disorder and its consequences from them. This blindness is so general that we may often perceive its effects in persons who seem to possess no ordinary piety. They observe, it is true, a great part of the laws of God ; but the only way that leads to life is that in which we observe all those laws without any exception.

II. *What are the sins to which we are most easily and generally blinded ?*

Observe, first, that we are more easily blinded with regard to small faults than to great ones, so that we cannot perceive the evident danger of these trifling faults when they are continued and multiplied. Secondly, that we are as easily imposed on with regard to the nature of these

faults, so that we look upon as trifling what are in reality very grievous in the sight of God.—Thirdly, that there are very great faults, and known as such, to which we are blind, because it would cause our self-love too much to be weaned from them.

MARCH 22.

ON THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CONSCIENCE AND SELF-LOVE.

I. *A right conscience.*

A right conscience is, first, a sure and faithful guide which conceals nothing from us; we have but to listen to its voice in order to know the road in which we should walk. Second, conscience is a severe judge which pardons us nothing; it makes us hear its reproaches for the least sin we commit. It gives us notice of our wanderings, and makes us blush. Salutory reproaches, useful notices, happy is he who is careful to hear you, and to follow you!

II. Self-love.

Self-love on the contrary is, first, a false and treacherous guide, which conceals every thing from us; it conceals the extent of our duties, it sets bounds to them, it weakens them; it falsely interprets the law of God, and furnishes us with a thousand pretexts to elude or restrain it. Second, it is an ever indulgent judge which forgives us everything, and always finds reasons to justify us. It always speaks in favour of dispensations, and never for the rigour and severity of the law. There is, therefore, a perpetual contradiction between our conscience and our self-love, and we cannot conceive of what consequence it is to our salvation to understand this contradiction, and to prefer the wise admonitions of our righteous conscience to the pernicious counsels of our self-love. The darkness of the one easily obscures the lights of the other, and all is lost when they are on good terms with each other.

MARCH 23.

ON FALSE CONSCIENCE.

I. *The errors of a false conscience are the more dangerous because it is so easy to fall into them.*

First, because it is easy to be blinded with regard to our duties, particularly when we find them contrary to our inclinations and interests. Every thing that we wish, every thing that we eagerly desire, seems lawful in our eyes. Secondly, because it is no less easy to be blinded in the precise distinction between virtues and vices. Can there be any thing more like constancy than obstinate self-opinion—more like liberality than profusion—more like meekness than timidity? Every virtue, when carried to a certain excess, becomes a vice; and unless the eye of our soul be perfectly pure, it cannot see, without difficulty, the brief interval that exists between both.

II. *The more one is elevated in the world,*

the more liable he is to have a false conscience.

Because his interests are then more considerable, and his duties more extensive, and hence he is more liable to be deceived. Because he can then more easily find persons to flatter him, and justify all his faults. Never, therefore, confide in those deceitful, artificial characters, whose conversation is always favourable to the interests of your self-love.

MARCH 24.

ON THE ILLUSIONS OF FALSE CONSCIENCE.

I. It conceals evil from us, and consequently makes us commit it daringly, and with calmness.

This daring proceeds from the false assurance which conscience gives, that there is nothing criminal, that there is even nothing but what is praiseworthy and useful in the action it proposes.—Hence, the act is committed with calm-

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ness, because we feel neither trouble nor remorse for committing it. Fatal tranquillity, which hardens the sinner in his iniquity, because he is seduced by the appearances of a false peace—of an imaginary peace, whilst he is really and continually at war with God.

II. *By concealing evil from us it renders its cure more difficult.*

We deplore the unhappy state of a sinner who is delivered up to his foolish passions, and whom his tyrannical habits render the slave of sin; but the state of a soul that is seduced by the illusions of false conscience, is still more dangerous. This sinner knows, at least, that he is going astray, and if he sins with more knowledge, he is, for this reason, more likely to be corrected.—But what, O my God, is the misfortune of those who go astray without knowing it, or without acknowledging their wanderings!—and how much reason have we not to fear

that they will persevere until death in the ways of iniquity.

MARCH 25.

ON THE SINS OF IGNORANCE.

I. *There are two kinds of ignorance: the one involuntary and invincible, the other voluntary, either in itself or in its source.*

The former is so rare in an enlightened age like this, and in a Christian who lives in the world, and who has so many opportunities of knowing his duties, that it is useless to dwell upon it.—Let us here consider voluntary ignorance, which is so often relied on as an excuse for faults. “I did not know,” a person says, “that such a thing was forbidden.” “You did not know. But you could and you ought to have known it. Your ignorance, so far from justifying you, is itself a sin.” David prayed to the Lord to pardon his ignorances. “My ignorances do not remember, O Lord.” Now, whatever requires

pardon must be a sin that has rendered us culpable.

II. *The source of sins of ignorance :*

Is the neglect of instructing ourselves in our duties ; we do not fulfil them because we are ignorant of them, and we are ignorant of them because we are determined not to fulfil them. We dread severity and restraint. We look upon advices, counsels, sermons, pious reading, and rational scruples, as importunate lights, which only serve to disturb the tranquillity of a life, the entire of which we desire to spend in indulgence, and in an indifference for our salvation.

MARCH 26.

ON THE MEANS OF DISPELLING THE ILLUSIONS OF
FALSE CONSCIENCE.

I. *Those means are, to contrast the judgment which we form of the state of our conscience, with that which we pass on the conscience of others.*

The latter are always exact even to se-

verity; let us, therefore, adopt them as models of those which we ought to form in our own conscience. This judgment is enlightened to excess when we judge others. Why should it be blind when we judge ourselves? Why not employ to our own advantage that light which is in us, and which renders us so clearsighted in perceiving the vices of others, and so severe in condemning them?

II. *To compare the ways to which our conscience leads us, with the way that leads to heaven.*

This way is straight; it therefore has no connexion with a false conscience, and bears no proportion to it. It depends on ourselves to form our conscience according to our interests and desires. But we are deceived in taking them for our guides, and in adopting all the false principles with which they are capable of inspiring us. These vicious and erroneous principles will not enable us to widen the way that leads to salvation. Ought

the will of God then be accommodated to the conscience of man, or should the conscience of man be regulated and formed according to the will of God?

MARCH 27.

ON A TIMOROUS COMPARED WITH A SCRUPULOUS CONSCIENCE.

I. *A timorous conscience consists in a just fear of offending God.*

This fear is a reasonable fear, since the greatest misfortune that could happen to man is to incur the resentment of God—a necessary fear, since it is a restraint by which God keeps us within the bounds of duty. Every Christian, therefore, ought to have a timorous conscience, for without it, he would unrestrainedly abandon himself to the vanity of his desires. In order to be a true Christian, it does not even suffice to have a timorous conscience with regard to grievous faults: one should have a delicate conscience, that is, a conscience which will be affrighted at

the smallest sins, which will avoid them as much as possible, and which will not fail to reproach him whenever he has the misfortune to commit them.

II. *A scrupulous conscience is that which is disturbed to excess.*

It is sometimes confounded with a timorous conscience, and a delicate conscience. But it goes much farther; and worldlings unreasonably affect to consider those persons to be weak and scrupulous, who seem to them to be always penetrated with a lively fear of offending God. They are deceived; for this fear is, on the contrary, the height of wisdom, and it becomes blameable only when it is carried to an excess of inquietude, and a refinement in trifles which is injurious to the justice and goodness of our Sovereign Master.

MARCH 28.

ON CHRISTIAN VIGILANCE.

I. *Necessity of this vigilance.*

First, Jesus Christ has made it a precept—"I say to all, without exception, watch over yourselves;" *Omnibus dico, vigilate*. Secondly, this precept is chiefly founded on the importance and the multitude of our obligations. The law of God does not regulate our actions alone, but also the very thoughts of our spirit—the very motions of our heart; and it subjects both our soul and body to the order which it prescribes; it exacts an entire and perfect obedience. What vigilance do you not require to comply with so many duties whose detail is immense, with a virtue so weak that it is liable to fail at every instant.

II. *Practice of this vigilance.*

A faithful Christian incessantly examines with attention his duties to God, to his neighbour, and to himself. He

considers the nature of worldly dangers and temptations. He measures his strength that he may see whether he is obliged to fly from those dangers, or expose himself to them. He prays the Lord to increase his strength, and to support him by his grace. He considers the obligations and duties of his state. He has the law of God always before his eyes, that he may neither desire, nor say, nor do, anything which it forbids; or that he may fulfil all that it commands. The practice of Christian vigilance consists in the reunion of all those different observations, accompanied by mature reflection.

MARCH 29.

ON EXTERIOR PIETY.

I. *Interior piety is insufficient if it be not accompanied by exterior piety.*

To regard the exterior practices of piety as useless, would prove an ignorance of the spirit of religion. To omit them through human respect, would be to

blush at the gospel. "With the heart we believe unto justice," says St Paul, "but with the mouth confession is made to salvation." What this apostle says here of faith, is equally applicable to other virtues. We have them in our heart in order to be justified ; but to be saved, we exteriorly manifest them in our conduct and our actions.

II. *Exterior piety is not sufficient, if it be not sanctified by interior piety.*

Because every exterior action, divested of an interior sentiment, is a body without a soul,—a sounding brass, an empty and tinkling cymbal. No ; there is no prayer unless there be a heart which prays : no adoration unless the heart adores. From the moment you take away this interior sentiment, this sincere desire of pleasing God, which ought to sanctify all the works of a Christian, he no longer acts but through custom, through habit, complaisance, vanity, human re-

spect, or through a spirit of superstition and weakness.

MARCH 30.

ON THE EXTERIOR PIETY OF A MAN OF THE
WORLD.

I. *With regard to his actions, it ought to be regulated by the duties of his state.*

You live in the world ; your interior piety may be the same as that of the greatest solitaries, who live out of the world. Love God with the same ardour ; entertain the same desires of possessing Him, of serving Him, of pleasing Him ; the same zeal for His glory, the same submission to His will. Your state will admit of this ; because, whatever remains enclosed in your heart, and is confined to your soul, can never produce either trouble or alteration in the discharge of your duties. But your exterior piety cannot be the same with that of solitaries, for it must be always regulated by the duties of your state. Hence it follows, that if this state require from you

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more labour than prayer, you ought to spend more time at labour than at prayer.

II. *With regard to his conversation.*

A Christian, who lives in the world, should not set himself up as a preacher or a prophet, especially with regard to those whose particular conduct is not entrusted to his care. When he travels out of his sphere, the conversation of a virtuous man has no effect. His piety becomes disreputable when he begins to criticise. This piety should be only exemplary. Generally speaking, it is not his business to censure the vices of men, or to attempt to correct them, otherwise than by the mild and persuasive power of his example. A mirror has no voice to warn those who look into it, of the deformity of their countenance. But although it does not reproach them, it makes them sensible of their defects.

MARCH 31.

ON THE FAULTS WITH WHICH THE WORLD
REPROACHES THOSE WHO PROFESS PIETY.

I. These reproaches are not always unjust.

Because worldlings very seldom dare to decry piety, when they believe it to be solid, sincere, and true. When is it therefore, that they speak of it with derision? When they see those who profess it, 1st, Love virtue through humour, instead of employing their virtue to overcome and correct this humour. 2d, Love retreat through motives of sloth and idleness; not to seek God, but to avoid the world, and release themselves from the performance of their duties. 3d, Carry their devotion even to superstition, without examining the limits of each. 4th, Unite with their devotion, singularities, affections, caprice, and culpable inconsistencies.

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II. *We ought to despise the reproaches of worldlings when they are unjust, and to profit by them when they are not.*

If the world unjustly censures your piety, if it charges you only with imaginary defects, you ought to say with St. Paul—"I look upon all the judgments of men as nothing : God will be my judge." But if these reproaches be founded on real defects, you should no longer consider yourself a Christian, persecuted "for justice' sake," and you should think of nothing but how to reform the imperfection of your justice, which is the only object of its censure.

APRIL 1.

ON HUMAN RESPECT.

I. *It is an incomprehensible folly.*

If you are going to practise virtue, human respect will prevent you. "What will they say ; what will they think of me in the world ?" But what is this world, whose opinions and conversation you

dread so much? A collection of people whom one cannot know without despising, and whom one ought not to fear unless he be ignorant of what they really are. It is, nevertheless, to the frivolous and inconsiderate judgment of this multitude, that you sacrifice the salvation of your soul, although you have in opposition to its vain remarks, your reason, your religion, your conscience, and your God.

II. *When we wish to gratify our passions we defy human respect.*

If a person tells us that the report of our disorders astonishes, scandalizes, and disgusts even those who are generally reasonable, we are not disturbed in the least. "What right have these people," we will say, "to criticise my conduct? Am I obliged to give them an account of my actions? Do my character and reputation depend on their remarks?" Thus it is that human respect makes the sinner fall into contradiction. It is thus that we are on one side weak and timid, where

good is concerned, and on the other bold, intrepid, and even magnanimous in evil.

APRIL 2.

ON THE MEANS OF OVERCOMING THE WEAKNESS OF HUMAN RESPECT.

1. The first is to consider the example of Jesus Christ.

Even if the practice of Christian virtues costs us the most cruel humiliations and disgrace, has not Jesus Christ suffered much greater for our salvation? Are we not the disciples of an humble and almost annihilated God? Is he not our master and our model? and what would become of us if he had not humbled himself, "and made himself obedient even unto death?" And to what death? To the death of the cross, that is, to the very greatest excess of opprobrium and infamy.

II. The second is to consider the awful threats of Jesus Christ on this point.

He had the weakness of human respect in view, when he said, "If any one be

ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He shall come in his glory." We now may perceive which of the two we ought to dread—the judgments of the world, or those of God. Is it my duty, you say, to condemn the world by my conduct, and to renounce its maxims and manner of living? Was it your business, the Sovereign Judge will reply, to condemn the gospel by disobeying my laws?

APRIL 3.

ON THE CRIME OF HUMAN RESPECT.

I. *It offends God in his greatness.*

Because it makes us respect the creature more than the Creator. Because, placed as we are between God, who reveals to us his will, and man, who is opposed to it, it makes us rebels against God, in order not to displease man. What then becomes of that entire and absolute preference which we owe to our Sovereign Master? Is it not destroyed? and

if it still remain in speculation and idea, there is not the least practical trace of it. How could it make a Christian dare to say to his God—"I would serve you, O Lord, if the world, which I am more anxious to please, were not an enemy to your service?"

II. *It offends God in his goodness.*

Because these dispositions towards a more Christian and regular life, which we have not the courage to follow—these desires of giving ourselves to God, which are, however, ineffectual desires—these are the graces with which his goodness has favoured us, in order to draw us to himself; these are the Gifts of the Holy Ghost—the precious fruits of the redemption of Jesus Christ, which we destroy through human respect. Our salvation in the ordinary course of God's Providence, was interwoven with these graces; but the fear of the vain judgments of the world destroys all their efficacy. Thus, human respect, which

offends God in his greatness, makes us equally despise the advances of his mercy, and the riches of his goodness.

APRIL 4.

ON THE SIN OF THOSE WHO DECRY PIETY.

I. *This sin is the more grievous because it directly attacks the Divine Majesty.*

What ! you behold a man determined to serve God, and you dare to withdraw him from his service ! You act the part of a devil towards him ! Your conversations and railleries have no other tendency than to destroy the worship of the Divinity, and make it disappear altogether ! How, then, can you consider those conversations and railleries as trifling faults ? Were those tyrants who formerly overturned his temples and his altars, more culpable than you ? No ; they were, doubtless, less culpable ; because, 1st, They scarcely knew the God of Israel, whilst you have no such excuse. 2^d, This God is far less jealous of that exterior

worship which they wished to abolish, than of this interior worship which you destroy in the souls of others.

II. *This sin is the more grievous because those who commit it derive no advantage from it.*

When you shall have destroyed every sentiment of piety in this faithful soul, what will it profit you? What fruit—what satisfaction can you derive from such an attempt? Will it make you more rich or more happy? Even, should I recount the various passions which domineer over you, I do not behold one that can receive the least advantage from this sin. You, therefore, commit a sin of pure malice—a sin which is more fatal because its consequences are often irreparable.

APRIL 5.

ON WORKS OF PIETY WHICH ARE PERFORMED
THROUGH HUMAN RESPECT.

I. *We may edify men through motives of duty.*

We edify them through motives of duty when we practise those exterior works of piety which God commands or our state requires, without seeking the approbation of men, or dreading their censure. Now these works are truly referred to God. We desire to edify those who behold them, for the sole purpose of pleasing and glorifying Him; and it is this reference and intention which, properly speaking, sanctify our actions and render them meritorious.

II. *We may edify men through human respect:*

When we perform exterior works of piety, that we may not depart from received usages or established customs; or to satisfy those proprieties which the world looks on as indispensable. It is no longer a desire of pleasing God that influences our actions; it is an unmeaning respect for the world to which we are under no obligations, and a pernicious

forgetfulness of God, to whom we owe every thing.

APRIL 6.

ON TRUE PENANCE.

I. *In what does true penance consist.*

If you consider it in its nature, it consists in a voluntary detestation of sin, because it is an offence against God, together with a resolution of repairing and expiating it, and of taking all the necessary precautions not to commit it again. Observe: 1st, That this detestation is not a simple interruption, or a simple distaste of sin; it is a hatred, a sorrowful aversion from sin, accompanied by repentance and regret. 2d, That this detestation is not a passing displeasure, nor is it compatible with a relapse and return into sin, because it ought to be joined to a resolution of repairing sin by expiatory works, and of destroying it by suitable remedies and precautions. 3d, That this detestation does not consider sin with regard to its

deformity, or the temporal and human inconveniencies which it may produce ; it beholds it as an offence against God. Behold what true penance makes us hate and detest in sin.

II. *If you consider it in its extent, it embraces all sins without exception.*

If you still preserve an attachment to only one sin, you are not a true penitent. Your penance is no more than a contradictory disposition, by which you turn *towards* God, and *from* God at the same time : *towards* God to love him, by renouncing some sins ; and *from* God, to insult him, by remaining attached to others.

APRIL 7.

ON THE PROMPTITUDE AND LIVELINESS OF TRUE PENANCE.

I. *It cannot be too prompt.*

Does it not show a great contempt for God—is it not in some manner insulting to his mercy and goodness—when we know that we have fallen into disgrace with

him by sin, that he is our enemy, and yet pass entire months and years without being reconciled to him, although we are aware he is disposed to forgive us? It is not surprising that we forget him in these moments when we are carried headlong by the insane ardour of our passions: a man who is transported with fury does not feel a wound in the heat of battle. But when quiet is restored, when the ardour of passion is extinguished, or at least suspended, how can a Christian remain for an instant in a state of sin, without having recourse to penance?

II. *It cannot be too lively.*

How lively and sorrowful should not the repentance of a Christian be who has had the misfortune to offend his God! It is not alone a bitter and profound sorrow; it is called attrition and contrition, because it not only wounds but rends the heart, and breaks it in pieces. For if the measure of loving God be, as St. Augustine says, to love him without mea-

sure, *modus diligendi Deum est diligere sine modo*, how immeasurable should not be our sorrow and repentance for having neglected to love him !

APRIL 8.

ON THE REPENTANCE OF THE HEART.

I. *The heart is, properly speaking, the source of all sins.*

Our body is only a blind instrument which obeys the motions and guidance of our heart. Our exterior senses merely execute what the heart has conceived. "From the heart," according to Jesus Christ, "proceed all evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimonies, and blasphemies." An exterior action which is forced and involuntary, no matter how disorderly it may be, does not render a man culpable, if his heart consents not to it. But if the heart desire it, if it give its consent to it even before it be put into execution, man is already criminal.

II. *It is in the heart that penance ought to begin.*

The heart is the first criminal. It ought to be the first to receive punishment. You fast, you cover yourself with sackcloth and ashes : but if your heart be not changed, if it do not sacrifice to God, this criminal attachment, which has been the source of your wanderings, all your exterior demonstrations of penance will be worthless in the sight of God. "Make unto yourselves a new heart," said he to his people by his prophets. Weep, sigh ; —"rend your hearts and not your garments." This change of heart, this contrition of heart alone, is the soul of penance.

APRIL 9.

ON THE MERCY OF GOD.

I. *Men know not how to forgive.*

They know not how to be merciful : 1st, They pardon with difficulty. One may judge of this by the trouble that is

necessary to induce them to forgive injuries, and to be reconciled with their enemies. 2d, They pardon imperfectly; there remains nearly always a fund of resentment and hatred in the heart, which they can scarcely disguise, and which too often appears when an occasion presents itself. 3d, They sometimes pardon slight offences, but can they resolve to forgive atrocious injuries? 4th, They pardon, perhaps, a first injury, but on a second, a third, or a fourth, they become irreconcilable.

II. *God, on the contrary, easily pardons.*

1st, He never rejects the homage of a truly contrite and truly humble heart. "A contrite and humble heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." 2d, He pardons entirely and without reserve.—David had scarcely implored his mercy, with all the sentiments of true penance, when the prophet said to him—"The Lord hath put away thy sin from thee." 3d, He pardons great faults as well as small. David was

guilty of murder and adultery. 4th, He even pardons relapse into a sin already forgiven, provided the return to him be sincere, and accompanied by true repentance.

APRIL 10.

ON THE CONFIDENCE WHICH A CHRISTIAN OUGHT TO HAVE IN THE MERCY OF GOD.

I. This confidence is useful when it induces the sinner to return to God.

Hope confounds not. Christian hope is never disappointed; it cannot be confounded. But what is Christian hope in a converted sinner? It is the confidence of a man who repents, and who hopes that God will have regard to his repentance; it is the confidence of a man fully convinced that the mercy of God is infinitely greater than his malice, and who hastens to have recourse to it.

II. It is false and pernicious when it induces him to persevere in his sins.

"God is good," the sinner says, "He is

merciful; when I shall have committed all imaginable crimes, he will forgive me if I have recourse to the Sacrament of Penance, and receive absolution from my sins." God is good; yes, without doubt he is; but ought His very goodness be the resource and stay of your impiety? God is good; but if you abuse his mercy he will exert nothing but His justice. He is good; but his goodness will not save those who make it serve as a motive to offend him. God is good; but if you persevere in your disorders, only because you confide in his goodness, is such a hope less fatal than despair?

APRIL 11.

ON THE SINCERITY OF PENANCE.

I. *It is not confined to sincerity in accusing ourselves of our sins.*

Yet, it is by the fulness and sincerity of this accusation that the greater part of men judge of the sincerity of their penance. They put their mind to the

torture ; they run through all the folds of their memory with a scrupulous attention, in order that they may omit nothing, and if their accusation be entire they consider their repentance perfect. "Have I told all ? Have I forgotten any thing ?" Behold the only subject of their uneasiness ! They think of nothing but of stifling the remorse of conscience for a time, by an exact detail of their iniquities. They never think of stifling those remorse in their source, by a change of their will.

II. *The sincerity of penance principally consists in the sincerity of the renunciation of sin.*

It is, undoubtedly, a great sacrifice to humble ourselves at the feet of a man, and to make him acquainted with what we would often desire to conceal from ourselves ; but this sacrifice is not enough. "I have sinned," said Saul to the prophet Samuel—"th Lord has given me his orders, and I have disobeyed them."

What was the answer of the prophet?
"There is no forgiveness for you; God is not moved by your professions, because your heart is not changed."

APRIL 12.

ON THE HATRED OF SIN.

I. *We ought to hate sin because it displeases God.*

And as there is no sin but what displeases him, so there is not one which we ought not to hate: there is no reserve nor exception in the hatred which God bears to every thing that is sinful. There should, on this account, be neither exception nor reserve in this salutary aversion, which the sinner who desires to become faithful has conceived for every thing that displeases God. This aversion extends even to the objects which entice us to sin, and even to the occasions which are capable of leading us into sin. Descend into the depths of your conscience; is there not some sin, some habit, some

dangerous occasion which you will not resolve to sacrifice, because you are more attached to it than all the rest ?

II. *We ought to hate sin for ever.*

If the anger of God against sin were capable of being appeased, he would hate it less at one time than another ; if the sins of youth appeared less grievous to him than those of advanced age ; if disorders which have been committed through custom, could find favour in his eyes, our hatred of sin might be increased or diminished according to usages, to days and to age. But no ; the hatred which God bears to sin is a constant and invariable hatred, a hatred independent of times, and of the vicissitudes of years and of ages. Our hatred ought, if possible, be equal to his ; and when we once renounce sin, we ought to renounce it for ever.

APRIL 13.

ON THE CHARACTERS OF TRUE AND FALSE
PENANCE.I. *True penance.*

True penance makes us consider sin as an offence against God, as an evil against God, and consequently as the greatest of evils, as the only evil that ought to be feared, since there is no other evil but may become, through our patience, advantageous to our salvation, whilst sin is the only evil from which we can derive no advantage in a future life. It is on this principle that true penance makes us hate sin more than sufferings, shame or poverty: more than all that can injure our fortune, our glory, our goods, our repose, and even our life. Yes, a Christian is obliged to encounter all these evils, to bear them, to forget them, rather than consent to violate the law of God. We are bound to hate sin as much as we are obliged to love God.

II. False penance is more limited in its sentiments.

It makes use of restrictions and reserve in the hatred it has conceived for sin, and in the means which it adopts to repair or avoid it. It treats, it compounds with God, if we may say so, on the easiest possible terms. It studies the art of keeping ill-gotten goods without remorse, or of appearing to restore them without losing its wealth. It seeks for opportunities to hold on with the world, whilst it feigns to be detached from it—an infallible proof that it is not the offence against God which affects it most, and that the voice of self-love is still stronger in the heart than that of conscience.

APRIL 14.

ON THE STRENGTH OF THOSE INCLINATIONS
WHICH LEAD US TO SIN.

I. This force of inclination is a pretext with the greater part of sinners, to justify their disorders.

Who is there that does not say with St. Paul—"I feel in my members a law which fights against the law of my spirit, and which renders me captive under the law of sin. Unhappy man that I am! who will deliver me from this body of death? I do not perform the good which I desire, and I commit the evil which I do not desire." We, therefore, throw the blame of all our iniquities on the imperious force of this rebellious concupiscence; it triumphs, a person will say, over all my resolutions, and all my efforts; it is a tyrant that reigns in my heart in spite of me; if God be just, he will either deliver me from it, or not punish me for obeying it.

II. *Falsity of this pretext.*

Observe that St. Paul, who has left us so lively a picture of this combat between the flesh and the spirit, which he sustained like us, has taken care to apprise us, that his conscience reproached him with nothing. "I am conscious to myself of

nothing." That he took all possible precautions to avoid sin, that he treated his body harshly, and brought it into subjection, whilst you, worldlings, you who complain so bitterly of the violence of your inclinations, you think of nothing but of flattering them. Labour, like St. Paul, to subdue your flesh, and then you may mourn with him for your weakness, without experiencing its fatal consequences.

APRIL 15.

ON THE COMBAT OF THE FLESH AGAINST THE SPIRIT.

I. This ombat is the trial of our virtue.

There are in the Christian two different men; the carnal man, and the spiritual man; the man of God, and the man of sin; the child of wrath, and the child of grace; one is the impure and earthly offspring of sinful and disobedient Adam; the other is *grafted in Jesus Christ, and regenerated by the grace of baptism.* Now

between these two men there is a perpetual combat ; what the one approves, the other condemns ; what one seeks, the other fears. One always desires to follow the law of the flesh ; the other to obey only the law of the spirit. It is, no doubt, humiliating and painful to the just man to have to sustain this internal warfare, and to find within him two different wills which are always opposed ; but this opposition was necessary in order to exercise and try his virtue.

II. *Means of becoming victorious in this combat.*

Faith, prayer, vigilance, confidence in God, the mortification of the senses, are the arms we ought to use in combating and vanquishing this carnal and earthly man, this man of sin, this dangerous enemy whom we have within us. It is from God we receive this armour of light, and we become victorious principally by the succours of his grace.

APRIL 16.

ON THE REPARATION OF SIN.

I. *This reparation is absolutely necessary.*

For it is not sufficient to weep for our sin, to detest and renounce it for ever; we must also repair it by works directly contrary to sin. Without this, no matter what proofs we may give of our return to God, we only counterfeit penance, but do not perform it, according to the expression of St. Augustine, *non agitur pœnitentia sed fingitur*. Have you usurped the goods of others, or do you possess them unjustly? You must restore them. You have made your neighbour feel the effects of your hatred. You must now make him experience the effects of your charity. True penance is known by this generous reparation; every thing else is but the shell of penance. Reparation is the fruit, and it is by the fruit we judge of the tree.



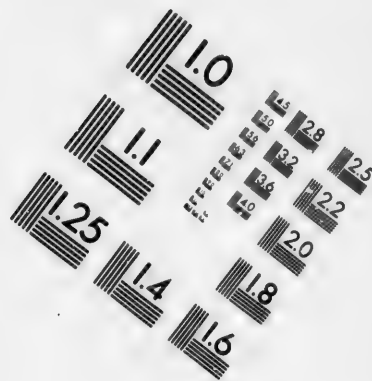
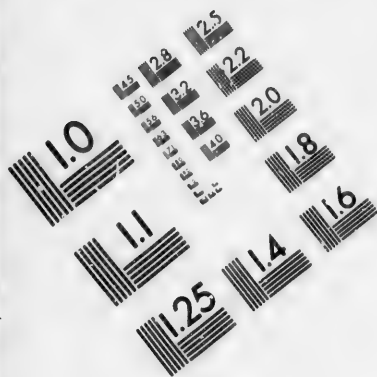
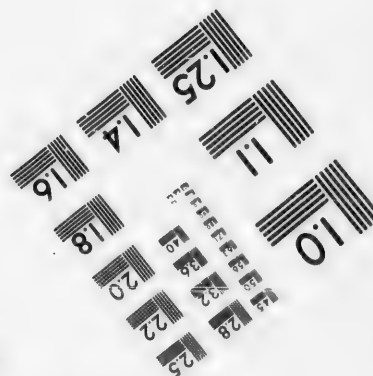
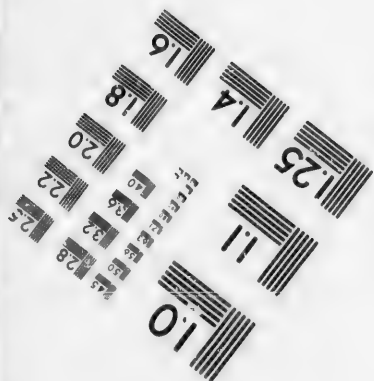
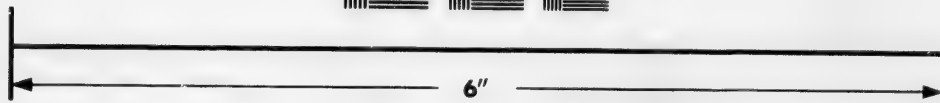
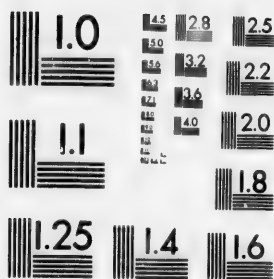


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II. *Two essential qualities of the reparation of sin.*

1st, It ought to be proportioned to the offence ; and hence if the sin be public, the reparation ought, if possible, to be equally so, in order to remove the scandal. 2d, It ought to be applied to the same objects as sin. We cannot repair calumny by prayer, injustice by alms, nor vengeance by austerity. No rule will permit us to give precisely to God what we have taken from our neighbour, nor to apply in charity what we owe to justice.

APRIL 17.

ON THE EXPIATION OF SIN.

I. *Necessity of this expiation.*

It differs from the reparation of sin, in as much as the latter destroys, by contrary acts, the consequences and effects of sin, whilst by expiation we punish ourselves for the sins we have committed. For it is necessary that sin should be punished even after it has been forgiven. God grants us the pardon which he offers

us, only on this condition. The flesh, then, may rebel, the world may murmur, heresy may dispute, nature may be alarmed ; but it is a truth of faith, and a capital truth, that the remission of sin does not necessarily include the remission of the punishment due to sin.

II. *The measure of this expiation.*

It ought to be proportioned to the quality, number and duration of our sins. Let us remember, that in those times when the Church exercised with entire freedom, all the severity of the ancient discipline, there was a sin which it was necessary to expiate by ten whole years of fasting, humiliations, and austerities. This severity has ceased ; but the obligations of expiating sins by satisfactory works, and works proportioned to their enormity and number, will always remain. Arm yourself, therefore, with a holy rigour against yourself if you have had the misfortune to offend grievously the Divine Justice ; and if the physicians of your soul be too indulgent, compensate

for their indulgence by your own severity according to the remark of St. Bernard: —*Si medicus clementior fuerit, tu age pro teipso.*

APRIL 18.

ON THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE.

I. *How advantageous it is to approach it often.*

The obligation which this sacrament imposes on us of entering into ourselves, and examining the state of our conscience to render an account of it to the minister of Jesus Christ, is a bridle capable of restraining us. 1st, We then hear the voice of our conscience, this interior judge which we can hear with difficulty in the midst of the trouble and dissipation of the world. 2d, In exposing the wounds of our souls to him whom God has given us, or whom we have chosen for our guide in the ways of salvation, we enable him to enlighten our conscience, and to make us blush for our wanderings. What can be more proper to regulate our

natural levity than this intimate and religious commerce, in which are to be found on one side sincerity, rectitude, confidence and docility ; and on the other a divine authority, a wisdom derived from the law of God, and, consequently, superior to that of the world ?

II. *The great danger of absenting ourselves from this sacrament.*

Woe be to you if you look on confession as a restraint, if you are repelled from it, if you look on it as a painful subjection, as an odious and insupportable yoke, and if the distaste which you feel for it induces you to neglect it ! You thereby prove that you have little of the love of God, little desire of acquiring or preserving purity of heart, and, consequently, very little zeal for the salvation of your soul. You resemble a sick man who is so great an enemy to himself as to dread the exposure of his wounds, because he fears he may be thereby cured. The longer you absent yourself from confession

the more weak and relaxed you become, the more you get accustomed to sin, the nearer you approach to impenitence.

APRIL 19.

ON IDLENESS.

I. *Nothing is more favourable to the passions than idleness.*

The passions easily invade and take possession of a soul which has no occupation; and if they sometimes attack us in the midst of our labour, how much more are they not likely to surprise and overcome us when they find us unoccupied! Although no labour, no application, no restlessness can stop that natural disposition which we have to gratify our passions, yet we ourselves will have the folly to provoke those domestic enemies by our idleness.

II. *Nothing is more opposed to the passions than application or labour.*

If you apply your spirit to some occupation that will fix its attention, if you combat this love of repose and tranquil-

lity, this fund of sloth and indolence which rules over you and renders you an enemy to labour and reflection, you will easily, or at least without much difficulty, preserve the innocence and purity of your soul. Be therefore incessantly engaged in useful labours, and such as are suited to your state ; and if they be irksome, or painful, perform them in a spirit of mortification and penance. You will thus destroy those lively passions which cherish idleness, and you will close against them the entrance of your heart.

APRIL 20.

ON THE OBLIGATION OF LEADING A PENITENT
AND MORTIFIED LIFE.

I. *We ought, as Christians, to follow this maxim:—The whole life of a Christian ought to be a perpetual penance.*

The whole life of a Christian ought to be a continual penance. Observe 1st, that the maxim does not say some particular actions of life, but the life itself.

2d, That it does not say some years, some days, or some moments, but the entire of life. 3d, That it does not say the life of a solitary retired in the desert, but the life of a Christian; and every Christian, no matter what his condition may be; because every Christian is a member and disciple of Jesus Christ, and he cannot hope for salvation unless he conform his life and actions to those of Jesus Christ, his master, his Saviour, his chief, and his model.

II. *We ought, as sinners, to follow this maxim.*

Because we are, in the sight of God, as criminals, obliged to satisfy his justice by the expiation of our sins, and to avert, by penance, the terrible chastisements with which he threatens us. Now, can it be possible to unite penance with the effusions of joy, the satisfaction of desires and the intoxication of pleasure? A penitent sinner proportions the exterior mortification of his senses to his condition and

his strength ; he knows that Jesus Christ has not led as austere a life as John the Baptist, but he sets no bounds to the interior mortification of his passions ; and it is particularly by this means he endeavours to attain as much as he possibly can, to the perfection of his divine model.

APRIL 21.

ON THE LIFE OF THE WORLD.

1. *It almost never thinks of God.*

And how would it find time to think of him ? Are not all its moments filled up by a continual round of useless diversions, frivolous amusements, or of cares which appear serious in the eyes of carnal men, and which, in reality, are no less frivolous and puerile than amusements ? The enchantment of trifles, according to the saying of the wise man, makes us forget God and our salvation. And if we even sometimes think of God in the world, it is for no other purpose than to mutter a few short prayers through habit and

without reflection ; and it often happens that we neglect prayer when we have a distaste for it, when pride takes possession of us, when we are hurried away by the distractions of the world.

II. *It does nothing for God.*

It does not watch nor labour but for the purpose of enriching and advancing itself; the imagination is filled only with human views, pretensions, and speculations. All its thoughts, all its desires, all its words, almost every step it takes, have no other object in view but the gratification of vanity, ambition, avarice, or pleasure. Such is the life of the world. Now, can any one persuade himself that such a life is fit to conduct us to eternal bliss ? And should we not despair of the salvation of those that are engaged in the world, if it were not certain that one might live in the world without conforming to its ordinary life ?

APRIL 22.

ON THE NECESSITY OF SANCTIFYING OUR LIFE
BY GOOD WORKS, IN ORDER TO BE SAVED.

I. The greater part of worldlings are not convinced of this necessity.

When they are neither unjust nor plunderers of their neighbour, nor slanderers, nor revengeful, nor slaves to avarice and pleasure, they imagine they are in the way of salvation. What can be laid to my charge, they say ; I have done no injury to any one : Is a person damned without committing a crime ? They readily admit that they are not of the number of those fervent Christians who offer an extreme violence to themselves, in order to gain heaven, but they cannot be persuaded that they belong to the class of sinners.

II. A person may be condemned for the simple omission of good works.

For 1st, In order to be saved, the Scripture says it is not sufficient to avoid evil,

we must also do good. "Avoid evil and do good." The salvation of man depends on these two points, and either is useless without the other. 2d, The barren tree is cast into the fire, though it did no mischief save that of uselessly encumbering the ground. 3d, The negligent servant is in like manner condemned to exterior darkness, not for having lost his talent, but for having failed to apply it to a good account. 4th, In the sentence which Jesus Christ will pronounce on the last day against the wicked, he will reproach them only with sins of omission. "I was hungry and you gave me not to eat," &c. Labour, then, without ceasing, to sanctify your life by good works, and never lose sight of this undoubted maxim in the principles of religion, that it is a very great crime in the eyes of God not to do good when you have it in your power.

APRIL 23.

ON THE REMEMBRANCE OF THE DAYS WHICH
WE HAVE PASSED IN THE FORGETFULNESS
OF GOD AND OF OUR DUTIES.

I. *The past is but a dream, as far as the things of the world, which we have enjoyed, are concerned.*

What now remains of all the vain pleasures and frivolous distractions which have so long been the charm of your life? Even though you have enjoyed them for many years, what advantage have you over him who has tasted them only for an instant? All is equally passed both for him and for you; and the past is nothing, it has neither existence nor reality. It is a dream which has vanished, a shadow, a vapour, a sound which has died away. Nothing is left but remembrance, and this remembrance will be speedily effaced. "Sinners," says the prophet, "have slept their sleep, and they have found nothing in their hands."

II. *The past is a real evil with regard to the sins which have been committed.*

They exist no longer, but they *did* exist. The charm has vanished, but the stain still remains. "Do not deceive yourself," said St. Bernard, "your sins have passed away from your hand, their action is over, but they still remain upon your conscience. *Transierunt a manu, non transierunt a mente.* You do not commit them again, but it will be always true that you have committed them ;" *Facere in tempore fuit, fecisse in sempiternum manet.* And upon this is founded the truth of that maxim—"It is sufficient for the just man to have sinned but once to condemn himself to eternal penance." *Iusto satis est semel peccasse ad fletus æternos.*

APRIL 24.

ON THE GOOD USE OF THE PRESENT TIME.

I. *The present is the only time of which we can make a good or bad use.*

The past is no more ; the future has not

yet arrived. The present alone belongs to us. But this present is a rapid and fleeting moment ; an almost imperceptible point, which ceases to exist as soon as we have reflected on it. Imagine time to be a vast torrent which comes towards you with inconceivable rapidity. What has flowed by you will return no more—this is the past. What is flowing towards you has not yet reached—this is the future. What has just reached you is the present. You may take advantage of it.

II. *What use ought we make of the present time ?*

No other but to apply with care to the concerns of our salvation in order to insure ourselves a merit and recompense which will last for ever. No, there is not a moment of our life which we ought not and which we might not employ to gain heaven ; no moment which does not furnish us an opportunity of means of practising some virtue ; none in which we ought not to be ready to appear before

God, to render him an account of our actions ; none, in fine, which may not be the decisive moment of our salvation.

APRIL 25.

ON THE UNCERTAINTY OF THE FUTURE.

I. *The future is uncertain ; and yet we are occupied by it alone.*

We are always thinking of the future, and never of the present. We anticipate it as if it were too slow, and we suffer the present to escape as if it were too swift. We are wandering in the time which has not yet arrived, and we do not think of the only time which subsists and belongs to us. We do not live, but we hope to live, *Non vivunt homines, sed victuri sunt.* We say—"I will go, I will obtain such or such a favour, I will attain such a degree of elevation, and rise to such and such a height of fortune." The foolish rich man says in the gospel, "I will throw down, and I will build up ;"—not thinking that

he was forming plans on the very eve of his death.

II. *The future is uncertain, and yet we wait for the future, to give ourselves to God.*

You defer from day to day the total surrender of yourself to God. You are waiting, you say, until you reach a more advanced age. But will you arrive at that age? You are waiting until you grow old. But will you ever enjoy an old age? You are waiting for a perfect disengagement from a multitude of affairs in which you are engaged. But are you certain you will ever see an end of them? You are waiting for to-morrow. But will you ever see another day? "This very night I will demand an account of your soul," and if you die in your sin, what will become of you?

APRIL 26.

ON THE DELAY OF CONVERSION.

I. *Delay not, says the wise man, to be converted to the Lord, and do not defer it from*

day to day, because you are not sure of time.

When in fact, will this time arrive at which you are resolved to change your life? Perhaps it will be much more encumbered by the cares and embarrassments of the world than that which you neglect; new ties, new difficulties, new obstacles, will be opposed to those projects of conversion which have no reality in them.

II. You are not sure of yourself.

Man is inconstant for good, and constant for evil. You look on your conversion as a fruit which is not yet ripe, but which will ripen in time. You imagine that at that time your resolutions will be more firm, your passions more weak, your repugnances less strong, and your attachments less sensible. Undeceive yourself; this time may arrive, but you will not profit by it; it will be rather this pious inclination that you now feel, which will be weakened—it will be this desire

of conversion that will disappear. You will feel a greater distaste for virtue, and a greater attachment to vice. You will no longer have the same sentiments for God and for your salvation. You will be the same only so far as the world and sin are concerned.

APRIL 27.

ON THE FALSE IDEAS ENTERTAINED BY SINNERS
OF THE MERCY OF GOD.

I. They believe it to be infinite, and they are thus encouraged.

They make the mercy of God a title and motive for persevering in their disorders. They are not deceived in believing this mercy to be infinite, because it is so in reality, like the other attributes of God. But they are deceived for want of reflecting that this mercy is infinite in one sense, and limited in another. In what is it infinite? It is so, inasmuch as it extends to all men and to all sins; because it makes no distinction between

Jew and Gentile, for they have all the same God, "who is rich to all those who invoke him." It is infinite, inasmuch as it pardons the blackest crimes, the most unheard of iniquities ; and hence it is, that the greatest sinners should never despair of their salvation.

II. In what respect is the mercy of God limited ?

It is limited when the sinner is obstinate, when he resists, when he always delays his conversion ; because then the Lord, whose patience he has wearied, closes the bowels of his mercy, and refuses to hear the voice of those who would not attend to his. This is what was announced to the whole human race, by the angel who is spoken of in the Apocalypse, who "having placed one foot upon the earth, and another on the sea, shall lift up his hand towards heaven, and swear by the name of the Eternal that time shall be no more ;" that is, that the time

of mercy is past, and that the Lord is about to give free course to his justice.

APRIL 28. .

ON THE PREPARATION FOR DEATH.

I. *This preparation ought to last during our entire life.*

We are, therefore, at liberty neither to delay nor interrupt it; and it is for this reason that Jesus Christ does not merely say in the gospel, prepare yourselves, but be always ready. *Estote parati.* We should then distinguish two sorts of preparation for death: an actual preparation which precedes the last moments of life, and an habitual preparation which extends through every moment of life, by the care which we take to sanctify them.

II. *This habitual preparation should not prevent our attention to all the duties of our state.*

On the contrary, it should make us more attentive to those duties, because we discharge them with all possible zeal

and diligence, that we may be always fit to appear before God. The true Christian never loses sight of this maxim of St. Jerome—"Labour as if you were always to live; and live as if you were every day to die."

APRIL 29.

ON DEATH-BED REPENTANCE.

I. The sinner who delays his repentance to the hour of his death, depends upon what he will do for God at his last moments.

Ill-founded hope ! For can he do more than those foolish virgins, who, not being prepared to go meet the bridegroom when he was approaching, were endeavouring to recover their lost time, at the very moment he arrived ? They asked for assistance ; they returned with their lamps lighted, and nevertheless, whilst they were knocking at the gate, he answered—"I know you not," because their piety was but exterior, and their heart was not changed.

II. *The sinner depends upon what God will do for him at the hour of death.*

He is assured that God will grant him the grace of a happy death; but God is not bound to bestow to any one this final and decisive grace; it depends solely upon his will, because it is just that the salvation of man should be always in his hands. The greatest saint should always tremble, because he is not sure of obtaining it; and you, sinners, you enjoy an assurance which the just do not possess. Has God, then, promised you this grace, which is so precious and desirable? On the contrary, he has declared a hundred times that he will refuse it.—“You shall seek me,” says he, “and you shall not find me, and you shall die in your sins!”

APRIL 30.

ON THE FALSE SECURITY OF SINNERS.

I. *It is founded on the promise made by God to the penitent sinner, to forgive him his sins.*

But this promise has no reference to the sinner that is determined to persevere in his sins until death. The Lord has considered in the world two kinds of sinners—the one weak and timid, who do not hope enough; the other rash and presumptuous, who hope too much. He says to the first:—"Take courage; for no matter what sins you have committed, I will forgive you the very moment you return to me." He says to the other,—“Tremble; for although my promise is inviolable, it never reaches to the extent of favouring your impenitence.”

II. *It is founded on the examples of God's mercy to sinners, which we read in the Scriptures.*

David had scarcely bewailed his crime, when the prophet announced to him its forgiveness.—At the very moment when Magdalen began to wash the feet of her Saviour with her tears, all her sins were remitted her. This is quite true; but none of those sinners deferred repentance

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to the hour of death. The impenitent sinner can still less hope for his conversion from the example of the happy criminal who was crucified on Calvary, at the side of Jesus Christ. It is true that he was not converted until the last hour of his life. “But,” replies a holy Father, “this was also the first hour of his faith.” *Non fuit extrema illa hora, sed prima.* At the first instant in which he began to know Jesus Christ, he also began to love him, and no matter how late his repentance may appear, never was conversion more prompt or less deferred.

MAY 1.

ON THE JUSTICE OF GOD.

I. *We feel pleasure in thinking on those attributes of God that are favourable to us.*

We love to consider him as “the Father of mercies, and the God of all consolation;” as a tender and indulgent parent who feels more pity than anger, at the

faults of a lively and inconsiderate child, and who crowns the return of the prodigal by favours which excite envy in the breast of the son that has never gone astray ; as a beneficent God, who “wills not the death of a sinner, but rather that he be converted and live.” These ideas are true, solid, and consoling ; they should serve to strengthen our hope.

II. *But they should not make us forget those attributes which are capable of inspiring us with a salutary fear.*

God is good ; but he is just ; he commands us to call him *Our Father*, and he earnestly wishes to assume the name ; but he will be our judge : he is merciful, and always ready to forgive us ; but a time will come, when his justice will render him inexorable : in a word, he is good in this world, and during life ; but at death, at judgment, he is a God of terror —“he intoxicates himself with the blood of his enemies, he tears them in pieces, he devours them, he throws him-

self upon them as a lion upon his prey ;” and nothing less than a whole eternity of pains and torments will be sufficient to satisfy his justice.

MAY 2.

ON THE ETERNITY OF THE PAINS OF HELL.

I. *We should believe that they are eternal, although it seems incomprehensible to us.*

Every thing is incomprehensible and mysterious in religion, as well as in nature. The smallest portion of matter, considered in the innumerable multitude of its parts, contains an abyss of difficulties and contradictions, against which all the efforts of human philosophy have hitherto been directed in vain ; and if we are unable to comprehend the smallest of God’s works, how can we comprehend himself, or accurately measure the entire extent of his power and his justice ? He has repeated one hundred times in the Scriptures, that the punishment of the damned will be eternal ; we should, there-

fore, believe it. It is one of the capital truths of religion, and so principal a truth, that those sects which separated from the Catholic Church, have not dared to dispute it. The authors of these sects denied other mysteries; but this appeared to them so clearly established by Scripture, that they could not refuse to believe it.

II. *Nothing but the personal interest of the sinner could make him doubt this truth.*

He can conceive an eternity of rewards for a fleeting action, but he will not acknowledge an eternity of punishments for the sin of a moment. He will admit that the greatness of God is infinite, that the blood of Jesus Christ, which the sinner abuses, is of infinite value, but he is unwilling to believe that sin will be punished by torments that are infinite in duration. Why is it then that he rebels against this truth? It is because he wishes to be always a sinner, and always happy, or at least to be unhappy only for a time. But what will his

interest avail against a truth promulged by God? And when he has spoken, does not man consult his interest and his reason by being silent and obedient?

MAY 3.

ON DESIRES.

I. *We should make a distinction between desires; for there are wicked desires which we should banish from our soul.*

Such are, 1st, *Useless desires*, which produce the whims and chimeras of a disordered imagination. 2d, *Rash desires*, to which class most of our desires belong; their temerity springs from our ignorance of the future. You earnestly wish for an establishment that appears agreeable in your eyes, because you do not know that it will constitute the misery of your life. You aspire to this degree of fortune and elevation, because you are not aware that it will only serve to render your fall more sudden and notorious. 3d, *Criminal desires*. Crime is always preceded by a

desire which urges you to commit it ; if you extinguish this desire, if you stifle this monster in its birth, you will destroy sin in its source. Be therefore always careful to limit and regulate your desires.

II. *There are good desires which we ought to excite and entertain in our soul.*

Such as the desire of rendering ourselves more and more agreeable to God, and useful to our neighbour ; of increasing every day in grace, wisdom and virtue ; of obtaining new gifts from the Holy Ghost, of acquiring new merits ; the desire, in fine, of arriving at that heavenly kingdom, where we shall have nothing more to desire. It is in this sense that a Christian may be called “a man of desires,” *vir desideriorum*. He aspires without ceasing after what is most holy and perfect according to God. With regard to the frail and transitory goods of this life, he has not a sufficient esteem for them to make him desire them.

MAY 4.

ON THE DESIRES OF THE FALSE GOODS OF
THIS WORLD.

I. *Worldlings are constantly filled with those desires.*

They generally desire all the goods that are comprised under the name of fortune, and these desires are their torment, because they are never satisfied. A desire enkindled in the heart is a devouring fire; the more you nourish the flame, the more it will increase.

II. *Because they are always accompanied by fear and chagrin.*

We are not the only persons who desire the false goods of the world; others wish for them as much as we do, and their pretensions to them are frequently better founded and more efficacious than ours. They fear that they will not succeed: most generally they obtain nothing, or at least they obtain but a little. They never enjoy all that they desire, and still

less, all that they can desire. St. Augustine, then, had reason to say, "Thou hast created us, O Lord, to love thee, and our souls can never find true repose but in thy love."

MAY 5.

ON THE DESIRE OF ADVANCING IN THE WAYS
OF JUSTICE.

I. *It ought, at least, to equal that which worldlings have to advance their fortune, when the goods of this world are concerned.*

They are never contented, never satisfied. They never think of those who have less than themselves; they think only of those who have more, in order that they may arrive at the same height of grandeur and fortune, and that they may then exceed them if possible.

II. *When, on the contrary, the blessings of grace are concerned,*

Worldlings never look up to those who have more virtue than themselves; they consider only those who have less. They

never dream of equalling or surpassing those who are more advanced in the ways of justice. They take the most relaxed and imperfect as their models. Let us reform this abuse. 1st, With respect to worldly goods; look upon those who have less than yourself, and you will always find yourself rich. 2d, On the contrary, with respect to virtues, always look up to those who have more than yourself, and you will blush for your weakness and imperfections.

MAY 6.

ON THE CUSTOMS OF THE WORLD.

I. *A Christian who lives in the world, ought to conform to its customs in every thing that is not contrary to the law of God.*

For what motive could he have for not doing so? Would it be out of contempt for those who observe those customs? A true Christian despises no one; he reserves contempt for himself alone. Could it be from a vain desire of appearing singular?

But this desire is entirely opposed to the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Is it for want of complaisance and proper treatment towards those with whom he is obliged to live? Christian Charity commands us to be meek and complaisant, and even to anticipate the whole world in this respect. Is it, in fine, in order to avoid the chagrin and restraint which are annexed to the different duties prescribed by the customs of the world? It is by submitting to this habitual restraint that a Christian practises the renunciation of himself, and fulfils the duty of carrying his cross.

II. *A Christian ought to withdraw from the customs of the world when they are opposed to the law of Jesus Christ.*

He then imitates those faithful Israelites, who, leaving an idolatrous people to bend the knee before Baal, remained firm and immovable in the service of the God of Israel. He says to himself, like the holy old man Eleazar: "If I betray the interests of God and his law, I may, per-

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Most High, and nothing will be able to
save me from his vengeance."

MAY 7.

ON THE INSTRUCTIONS OF JESUS CHRIST.

*I. Jesus Christ is, properly speaking, the
only Master and Doctor whom we ought to
hear.*

Those who represent him on earth are
our masters and doctors only because they
speak to us in his name. This divine
Saviour instructs us in two ways. By his
lessons ; study the gospel as delivered by
the Catholic Church, with attention and
docility ; it is the rule of your faith and
morals. All religion is comprised in it.
You will there find every thing that you
ought to believe and perform, in order to
be saved. It is there he has revealed to
us those great mysteries, those primary
truths, which are the foundation of the

moral law ; the fall and the redemption of man, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the operations of grace, the supreme bliss of the elect, and the eternal torments of the wicked.

II. *He instructs us by his example.*

What he has said, and what he has done, are the abridgment of Christianity. What he has said : it is to his words we ought to be obedient, and it is by them he is our master. What he has done : we ought to imitate his actions, and it is by them he is our model. "All our misfortune," says St. Bernard, "springs from this source :"—we are unwilling to follow either his lessons or his examples. Nevertheless, his gospel must be either your rule or your condemnation. Take your choice : for if it be not the means of your salvation, it will infallibly be the title of your condemnation, and the foundation of your ruin for eternity.

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MAY 8.

ON CHRISTIAN HOPE.

I. *What is Christian hope?*

It is one of the three principal virtues of Christianity; and yet it is so little known in general, and still less practised. Some will tell you that it consists in a firm and assured persuasion, that we shall be saved through the mercy of God; others, in an ardent desire of heavenly bliss. But this notion is imperfect, unless we add that this persuasion and desire are founded on the promises made by God to those who shall fulfil his law, and profit by the succours of his grace. It is in this respect that hope is like faith; the latter is unfruitful and dead if you separate it from works, and for the same reason, unless you unite with hope those works which sanctify us, it will produce nothing for salvation.

II. *The use of Christian hope.*

If you be in the state of grace, hope

will sustain you against the attractions of vice, against the negligences of tepidity, and the weakness of diffidence. If you be in the state of sin, your hope in the mercy of God will animate you with the desire of returning to him without delay. In fine, if you are exposed to violent temptations—that uncertain state between the state of grace and the state of sin—have confidence in God, hope in the succours which he has promised you; this is the true means of obtaining a victory.

MAY 9.

ON THE CONFIDENCE WHICH A CHRISTIAN OUGHT TO HAVE IN THE PRAYERS THAT ARE OFFERED FOR HIM.

I. *They are, undoubtedly, useful.*

And worldlings themselves are so convinced of this, that whilst they are engaged in criminal habits, if they have any sentiment of religion remaining, they conjure persons that are consecrated to God, to pray for them. It was thus Pharaoh,

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when he was persecuting the people of God, said to Moses, "Pray to your God for me." It is well known, how much the tears and prayers of Monica contributed to the conversion of her son Augustine. The Church herself continually implores the mercy of God in behalf of the living and the dead. Neglect not to avail yourself of those prayers which are animated by zeal, inspired by charity, and which the Lord has often heard.

II. *But do not place all your confidence in them.*

You can, without doubt, reap much benefit from the prayers that are offered for you, but nothing can dispense you from praying yourself. Whilst the apostles prayed for the Chananean woman, they were not heard; she approaches herself to Jesus Christ; she prostrates herself before him, and her daughter is healed—"to teach us," says St. Chrysostom, "that God loves our own prayers, sinners though

we are, before those of the saints, which may be offered for us."

MAY 10.

ON THE CONSTANCY OF THE MARTYRS.

I. *Every Christian ought to be disposed to suffer martyrdom rather than renounce his faith, or violate the law of God.*

When we read the histories of the martyrs, we look on them as extraordinary men, as heroes elevated to a most sublime degree of constancy and virtue, and yet they have endured no suffering, they have made no sacrifice, which we are not equally bound to make, provided we were placed in the same circumstances. Yes, every Christian is bound to defend the principles and practice of his religion, even unto martyrdom if it be necessary. This is an inevitable consequence of that entire and absolute preference which God requires of us by the first and greatest of his commandments, and it was this that induced the Saviour of the world to say,

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—“He who wishes to save his life will lose it, and he who will lose it for the love of me and the gospel will save it. But how can one be disposed to die for God, when he will not resolve to live for him, or make the least sacrifice for his sake?

II. *The whole life of a Christian should be a continual martyrdom.*

It is a mistake to imagine that there has been only a certain number of saints, who have arrived at the bliss of heaven, by the road of martyrdom; all have merited the same crown; the one by a more speedy and more abridged martyrdom; the others by a martyrdom more slow and more durable. All have not made the sacrifice of their life; but all have sacrificed the vices and attachments of the flesh and the world. There is a martyrdom of the heart as well as of the body. The latter appears frightful by the horror of suffering: but the other has also its rigours by the continual violence which it does to nature.

MAY 11.

ON THE INDISSOLUBLE UNION OF PROBITY AND
RELIGION.I. *Without religion there is no probity.*

One may have, perhaps, an apparent fleeting and limited probity, but never a solid, constant, and universal probity. If one be restrained only by the fear of human laws, secret crimes will escape those laws, and it often happens, that the power of those who commit them, keeps the law silent. What bridle, then, would be capable of restraining the great and powerful of the world, when they have shaken off the yoke of this divine religion, which alone can regulate their authority, and their duties? The laws, it is true, have more effect on individuals than on them; but they act only on the body; it is religion alone that can affect the heart.

II. *Without probity there is no religion.*

The natural law is the first of all laws: the gospel, so far from destroying it, is

only engrafted on it, and renders it more perfect and extensive. He who violates this law by injustice, calumny, false testimony, cruelty, or perfidy, no matter how devout he may externally seem, can have only the shadow and phantom of religion. He tramples all rights under foot; he abandons all principles; he is worse than a Pagan and an Infidel.

MAY 12.

ON THE DIFFICULTY OF SANCTIFYING OURSELVES
IN THE WORLD.

I. *We should not believe that it is easy to become holy in the world.*

The gospel requires from us so great a purity of morals, so great a detachment from earthly goods, so perfect and universal a devotion to the service of God, that it is very difficult to practise it in the midst of the world, which we may consider as the abode of voluptuousness, injustice and pleasure, where a contagious air is breathed, by which hearts are in-

fectured with an almost general corruption ; where we perceive so many objects to excite our passions, where one has at his hand, if we may so speak, so many means of gratifying them ; where the snares are so dangerous, and the falls so common. This first reflection will make you work out your salvation in the world with fear and trembling.

II. *We should not believe that it is impossible to be saved in the world.*

We cannot, it is true, without the succours of grace ; but that which appears impossible to man is possible to God ; and when Jesus Christ expressed himself with so much force and energy on the extreme difficulty with which the rich of this world can obtain the kingdom of heaven, he did not wish to drive them to despair : he rather desired to make them feel how much they required a particular vigilance, and a very great effort of his grace, in order to save themselves from a shipwreck amongst so many rocks. "Have

confidence," he tells us, "I have overcome the world; and you can always overcome it when you combat with me." This second reflection will make you labour for your salvation in the world with an humble and salutary confidence.

MAY 13.

ON THE KNOWLEDGE OF VIRTUES AND VICES.

I. *It is easy to be deceived with regard to them.*

And hence is necessary—1st, A great uprightness of heart. 2d, A great watchfulness over ourselves, in order to make a proper discernment between virtue and vice. Otherwise we shall mistake real vices for virtues, ambition for an heroic propensity, revenge for an act of justice, pride for an elevation of sentiment, extravagance for necessary expense, deceit for wisdom, hastiness for valour, and even licentiousness for lawful indulgence.

II. *The same illusion will cause us to mistake true virtues for vices.*

Patience will appear in our eyes a shameful weakness; economy, a sordid avarice; forgiveness of injuries, cowardice; humility, baseness of spirit; prudence, a badly regulated fear; restraint in conversation, a stupid silence. A Christian, then, should be anxious to make a just discernment between vices and virtues. 1st, In order to judge with equity those who are subject to him. 2d, That he may judge himself.

MAY 14.

ON THE MEANS OF SANCTIFYING OURSELVES
IN THE WORLD.

I. *The first is, to consider that the state of a Christian who lives in the world is not incompatible with holiness.*

Tertullian had said that a Christian could not be an emperor; and others added, that he could not be rich. But they were in error: piety belongs to all conditions; all are not called to quit the world; Christianity does not form of itself a particular condition, or one different from

others, but it equally conducts all to perfection. Whether you be rich or poor, a master or a servant, born in the dust or elevated on a throne, you are called to the kingdom of heaven, and without renouncing your condition, you can obtain it.

II. *The second is to reform the abuses, and to profit by the graces of your state.*

There are abuses peculiar to each state: pride, idleness, and indulgence, are the abuses of grandeur; luxury, hardness of heart, and foolish expenses, are the abuses of riches; impatience, murmuring, and fraud, are the abuses of poverty. Avoid these abuses, and you can sanctify yourself in poverty, in opulence, and in grandeur. There are also graces peculiar to each state, that is, graces specially intended to preserve us from the vices and dangers connected with our state, and our salvation depends on our zeal in asking for those graces, and our fidelity in corresponding with them.

MAY 15.

ON THE OBSTACLES WHICH ARE OPPOSED BY
THE WORLD TO OUR SALVATION.

I. The greater those obstacles are, the more they should animate our courage.

To gain heaven is our object here : do you imagine that you will obtain it without its costing you an effort ? You have also to obtain the crown of conqueror ; can you hope to overcome without having combated ? The greater the dangers are, the more insurmountable the obstacles appear to us, and the more merit and glory we acquire by overcoming them. Shall we do less for God than for the world ? Shall we have less strength, less constancy and courage in acquiring the immortal goods of a future life, than in procuring the frail and transitory goods of the present ?

II. There is not one of those obstacles from which we may not derive some advantage to salvation.

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Because there is not one which may not be a means of sanctification, if we know how to use it. Do not riches furnish us with a thousand occasions of exercising charity, and of amassing a treasure of good works in heaven? Does not power enable us to cause justice to be observed, and to conduct men to virtue by our example? In taking advantage of all, we find God throughout all ; we serve, we love, we adore him, we sanctify ourselves in all conditions, and in all circumstances of life.

MAY 16.

ON THE LOVE OF RETREAT.

I. *To a Christian who lives in the world, this love is frequently an illusion.*

Wordlings, themselves, sometimes form plans of retreat.—When one speaks to them about being converted to God, and reforming their conduct, they reply that they wish to quit all, and abandon all, as if the disorder of their life were inseparably annexed to their condition, and that

it was out of their power to find a cure for it. But, observe here: it is not the tumult of the world and the exterior agitation of your business, which prevent you from serving God; it is rather the interior cry of your passions, to which you lend a willing ear, it is the tyranny of your vicious habits which you cherish.

II. *We may find where we please retreat and solitude, even in the midst of the world.*

May we not, by a good use of time, always gain some hours or some moments of retreat, to meditate on the law of God? May we not habitually make for ourselves a sort of retreat, in the bottom of our hearts, where we may entertain ourselves interiorly with God, though we may appear to be engaged only with the cares and interests of the world? At such moments the spirit is attentive to the business of the world, but the heart is with God.

MAY 17.

ON THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE WORLD.

I. *The more it is known, the more it is despised.*

If there be something in it to dazzle us, there is also wherewithal to undeceive us. Limited as our knowledge of it is, we are aware that no person is satisfied in it. We know what little importance we ought to attach to those fleeting goods which have no solidity in them, which glide away from us and disappear like vain phantoms, at the moment we least expect it. The solitary who has not known the world, requires much reflection to be undeceived in its regard. His inexperience conceals its nothingness and vanity from him. But when he examines it more closely, it is revealed to him at the first glance.

II. *The more we know it, the more we should be weaned from it.*

It is sufficient to reflect on its false caresses, on its inconstant favours and its

base artifices. All its promises are vain, all its friendships are false, all its discourses are flattery ; calumny, ambition, interest, jealousy are its springs of action ; truth is banished from it : you find nothing in it throughout but dissimulation, lying, artifice and deceit. Amongst the crowd of people who surround you, how many are there who are attached to you by ties of true friendship ; how many are there who would share in your misfortunes, or who would not be ready to devote themselves to him who should occupy your place ? Behold a true portrait of the world, and yet this is the world which is preferred before God.

MAY 18.

ON THE DANGERS OF THE WORLD.

1. *Those dangers do not render it impossible for us to practise the morality of the gospel in every state of life.*

The two grand principles of this morality are, that we must “ love God with our whole heart, and our neighbour as our-

selves." Now, cannot a Christian, without quitting the world, or forsaking his state of life, fulfil those two obligations, which are the essence of the whole law? Can he not be raised to God by faith, and be united to him by love? Can he not hold communion with his neighbour by charity, and if he has fallen into any crime, may he not purify himself by repentance?

II. *Those dangers have not prevented the practice of this morality in all states of life.*

Recall to your mind the many saints who have lived, like you, in the midst of the world, without ever sacrificing to the world their religion, or their salvation. Remember those holy kings who, despite of all the charms and temptations of the world, have had the strength to elevate themselves by the thoughts of eternity, and to hold in their heart a secret and perpetual converse with God, always subject to the authority of his law, always

faithful to the impressions of his grace. What is there to prevent you from imitating their example?

MAY 19.

ON THE SANCTITY PECULIAR TO A CHRISTIAN
ENGAGED IN THE WORLD.

I. *Consider it with regard to his exterior conduct.*

He makes it his special business to unite the duties of civil life with those of his religion, in such a manner, that he never fails to perform what he owes to God, without ever forgetting what he owes to the world. He is familiar only with a few persons, but he is mild and complaisant to all. A good master, a good subject, a good citizen, a good magistrate, a good warrior, a good father of a family, an obedient son, a faithful spouse, a constant and generous friend—he shows by all his actions that “piety is profitable for all things, and that it is to piety the solid goods of this life, and those of the future, have been promised.”

II. *With regard to his interior.*

But if you penetrate into the interior of his soul, it is there he gives free scope to those grand sentiments of faith, of religion, and of piety, with which he is filled ; he sees nothing but for God ; he acts, he speaks, he labours, he breathes only for God. What noble and generous sacrifices does he not make him from the bottom of his heart ? Men, who only behold appearances, find nothing in his exterior to distinguish him from the other faithful ; but God, who fathoms the most secret depths of conscience, perceives in his soul motives the most pure, dispositions the most holy and the most sublime.

MAY 20.

ON THE THOUGHT OF DEATH.

I. *Often think of death.*

Not only often think of it, but think of it every day. Think of it continually, in order that you may be always ready to appear before God. "Be ready," said the Saviour, "because the Son of man

will come at the hour you least expect him ;" his arrival is that death which will surprise you, if you be not always prepared. Now, how can you be prepared, if you seldom think of it, or never think of it ? The time, at which you will lose sight of this decisive moment of your salvation, may be precisely that at which Jesus Christ will summon you before him. "Have, then, your last hour always before your eyes," said St. Basil : "when the day begins, doubt whether you shall live to its close, and when you enter into the darkness of night, do not be certain of beholding the following day."

II. *Think of death in order to sanctify all your actions.*

Be assured that there is no more efficacious means of inducing us to live well, than to reflect that each day that begins may be the last day of our lives. It was thus that holy Job used this reflection : "As long as I am in the world," said he, "I expect every day that my change shall arrive ; thou shalt call me, O Lord, and I

will answer thee: call me when thou pleasest, at whatever hour, or in whatever place it may be, I am ready to answer thee." Place yourself in such a condition as may enable you to address the same language to God.

MAY 21.

ON APPLICATION TO THE DUTIES OF OUR
STATE.

I. *This application is indispensable.*

You live in the world, and you wish to have no other occupation than prayer; no other care, no other labour, but that of meditating on the truths of salvation. This is an abuse; you cannot be a true Christian, but inasmuch as you discharge the duties of your state. I conjure you, my brethren, said the apostle to the first Christians, and I command you, on the part of God, that each one of you should apply to his own business, that is, to the business with which he is charged by his profession and his state. Behold a commandment and a prayer at the same time,

which decide the point, at which the apostle considered this application important and necessary for salvation.

II. *This application is frequently neglected even by those who make a profession of piety.*

One will practise all the exterior duties of religion, but will not perform those of his condition ; he will prolong his prayers in the holy temple, and will abridge the time that he ought to bestow on labour ; he will enter into all the works of charity, and neglect the obligations of justice.

MAY 22.

ON THE HOMAGE WHICH WE RENDER TO GOD BY
DISCHARGING THE DUTIES OF OUR STATE.

I. *God is, properly speaking, the author of all states.*

It would seem at first sight that people become great by nobility or favour alone, that chance or industry makes masters, and that servants are created by necessity ; but if you ascend to the true source

of the various conditions of life, you will find that they proceed from God, who has instituted and ordained them for the maintenance of human society.

II. *The duties of our state are, therefore, an essential part of the worship which we owe to God.*

Who can doubt but that religion, which comes from God, requires us to perform all the duties of a state of which God is the author? Would he have instituted this state without desiring to see all its obligations fulfilled? He, undoubtedly, desires it, and in this sense it is true to say, that the duties of our state are real duties of religion, and that if they differ in their object, they by no means differ in the obligations which they impose upon us.

MAY 23.

ON THE FAULTS OF THOSE WHO SUBSTITUTE
PRACTICES OF PIETY FOR THE DUTIES OF
THEIR STATE.

I. *The first is pride.*

The practice of the duties of our state, although expressly commanded by religion, is not dazzling in its appearance ; it does not indicate of itself, distinguished piety. Sinners sometimes acquit themselves of those duties, at least exteriorly, with as much exactness and fidelity as the just. There is, therefore, nothing here to flatter pride, and this pride is always anxious to be flattered.

II. *The second is the caprice of self-will.*

We wish to enjoy the rights of our liberty even in the practice of our duties ; and as those of our state are not always agreeable to our whims and caprices, we love to substitute for them others that please us more, because they are of our own choosing—exercises of piety which we may change, vary, diversify, prolong, or abridge, according to our fancy.

MAY 24.

ON THE FIDELITY WITH WHICH RELIGION INSPIRES US WITH REGARD TO THE DUTIES OF OUR STATE.

I. *He who is guided by the spirit of religion will be always faithful to the duties of his state.*

No passion, no human motive can, in this respect, make more extensive demands upon us than religion. How many obscure duties in every state, which vanity itself will make us neglect, because it has nothing to gain in performing them! How many that appear even absolutely indifferent! Religion, on the contrary, sustains us. 1st, In the practice of obscure duties as well as those that are dazzling; because religion gains in the same proportion that vanity loses. 2d, Religion knows no duties as trifling, and considers none indifferent.

II. *He will be faithful to those duties at all times.*

If you are guided by vanity or human respect, these motives will influence you in the sight of men ; but you will be unfaithful when they shall not behold your infidelity. A person of this description is courageous in the open day, and a coward at night.—Again, various passions succeed and destroy each other ; if a contrary and superior passion arise, duty will be immediately sacrificed to it. This father of a family, whom interest makes wise, will become a dissipated character through inordinate love.

MAY 25.

ON THE SUFFERINGS ANNEXED TO THE PRACTICE
OF OUR DUTIES IN EACH STATE.

I. *Religion alone can sweeten those sufferings.*

There is hardly any one in the world who is contented with his state, and who does not envy the lot of others ; but if you consider your state in a spirit of religion, you will no longer complain of the suffer-

ings that are inseparable from it, you will be no longer tempted to change your condition. All states will appear equal in your eyes, because all have been ordained and established by the will of God. You will, therefore, not prefer one before another; because nothing is preferable to the will of God, nothing is preferable to what he has ordained.

II. *With respect to the accidental sufferings of our state.*

What wife will be better able to support a yoke that is so often rendered grievous through the cruelty of a husband, than she who considers her state in a spirit of religion? What master, what servant, what child, what father of a family, will make a better use of those mortifications which each must encounter, than he who has his eyes fixed on that Divine Providence from whom they proceed? Reflect on this principle, and apply it to the essential, or accidental and particular sufferings of your state.

MAY 26.

ON THE MERIT OF PERFORMING THE DUTIES OF
OUR STATE.

I. *The performance of those duties is an abundant source of merit.*

For in what does the true merit of man consist? Is it not in constantly executing the will and orders of God? Now, who accomplishes this but he who faithfully discharges the duties of his state? Labour and danger, at a time when they are prescribed by duty, are, therefore, more holy and meritorious than prayer.

II. *Jesus Christ, our master and our model, seems to have made this one of the principal grounds of his merit.*

He employed only the three last years of his life in performing those great actions which astonish us so much. And what had he been doing for the thirty years preceding? He was fulfilling the duties of his state; he obeyed his parents, he lived by the labour of his hands: the

world rolled on by its ordinary principles and prejudices. There were at Jerusalem many austere sects of Pharisees, who added to the law a thousand new observances. The world admired their sanctity. Where, nevertheless, were true merit and perfect virtue to be found? Was it not under the rustic cot, where Jesus Christ, submissive to his Father's will, was occupied solely by the duties of his state?

MAY 27.

ON THE MOTIVE WHICH SHOULD INFLUENCE US
IN PRACTISING THE DUTIES OF OUR STATE.

I. We should have nothing else in view but to please God.

In this respect religion subjects us to the same duties as the world; but it requires different motives. It wishes that we should perform through a spirit of submission to the divine will, that which the generality of mankind perform through a spirit of vanity, through a spirit of ambition, through a spirit of cupidity and in-

terest. "Servants," said St. Paul, "obey your masters in order to obey God."

II. *It is not always the difference of occupations which constitutes, in each state, the distinction between the just and sinners ; it is rather the difference of motives by which they are influenced.*

The just man labours for God, and the sinner for the world—the just man, in order to merit the goods of heaven, and the sinner to procure those of earth—the just man for the glory of God and his own salvation, and the sinner for his fortune or for his own glory ; and hence the same labour renders the one perfect in religion, and leaves the other destitute of the spirit and the fruits of religion.

MAY 28.

ON THE DANGERS PECULIAR TO EACH STATE.

I. *If there be no state without its sufferings, there is likewise none without its dangers.*

But if in all the occupations of your

state you are guided by a spirit of religion, you will find in all those dangers only frequent occasions of obtaining victories: you will triumph over pride by wearing honors meekly—over pleasure by using even lawful enjoyments with moderation—over covetousness by using riches without haughtiness, or too great an attachment to them.

II. *The idea which the Scripture gives us of him who sanctifies himself in the world, despite of all the dangers peculiar to his state.*

“Blessed is he,” says the wise man, “who has looked on the charms of gold without being dazzled by them, and who has possessed riches without placing his confidence in them!” Who is he? He is worthy of all our praises, and his life, though a simple and ordinary one, to all appearance, should be looked on as a continual series of wonders. He has made use of even the very dangers of his state in order to render himself perfect in

religion. *Qui probatus est in illo, et perfectus est*: He will, therefore, be crowned with immortal glory, because he was tempted to violate the law of God, and he remained faithful; he could have done evil, and he has not done it. *Qui potuit transgredi et non est transgressus; facere mala et non fecit.*

MAY 29.

ON THE VIRTUES WHICH ARE EXERCISED IN
PRACTISING THE DUTIES OF OUR STATE.

I. *A Christian finds in the duties of his state a continual exercise of charity.*

There is no state in the world which has not an immediate reference to the general welfare of society. Now, there is a commandment of God, which obliges us to love our neighbour as ourselves, and consequently to render him happy, and procure for him all the advantages that depend upon us. In all your occupations you should, therefore, consider the direct reference which they may have to the

public good, or the private benefit of your neighbour, and hence propose to yourself an end so noble, so pure, and so meritorious before God.

II. *A Christian finds in the afflictions of his state a continual exercise of penance.*

There is no state without its chagrins, and its sufferings; even kings themselves are not exempt from them; and if those who approach them continually suffer from the assiduity and complaisance they are obliged to display towards their masters, the latter do not suffer less from the faults and negligences of their servants. In what state will you not find crosses and thorns, subjection and restraint? We should turn them to advantage, by submitting to them in a spirit of penance, by offering them to God as an expiation for our sins, and by uniting them to the cross and sufferings of Jesus Christ.

MAY 30.

ON THE GLORY OF THE WORLD.

I. *Worldlings labour only for the glory of the world.*

They wish to be praised, esteemed, and respected; they aspire after titles and brilliant distinctions; they ask them, they solicit them for themselves, their descendants, and their families; they desire nothing less, than to render their names immortal, and the more elevated they are, the more means they fancy they possess for ascending higher. Behold what is called the glory of the world—behold the idol to which worldlings sacrifice their cares, their time, their repose, and frequently their life.

II. *The glory of the world is false.*

True glory cannot be found in the praises of men, which are often unjust and seldom sincere; neither does it consist in the respect or homage of men, in which their heart has so little share, and which ter-

minate with them ; nor again, in titles inscribed on brass or marble, which perish with time, and vanish like their heroes. There is no one but God who possesses, and who can bestow immortality. "To know your power, and to fear your justice, O my God," said Solomon, "is the true principle and the solid foundation of immortal glory."

MAY 31.

ON THE GLORY OF GOD.

I. *We ought to seek and desire nothing but the glory of God.*

"If I glorify myself," said the Saviour, "my glory is nothing." It is but a shadow, and a thin vapour, which scatters of itself, and has neither consistence nor solidity. To the immortal God be, therefore, rendered all honour and glory ! To him it properly belongs ; he is the author and the principle of all good ; it is, therefore, just, that he should have the glory of all, and we cannot attribute the least

portion of it to ourselves, without a sacrilegious usurpation.

II. *In seeking the glory of God alone, we ensure to ourselves immortal glory.*

"It is my Father that glorifies me," said our Saviour, "because I act and labour only for his glory." "I expect nothing from men," said St. Paul, "I have lived, I have laboured only for God; it is he who will be my recompense. I am too fully convinced of the nothingness and vileness of creatures, to be satisfied with their vain applauses: I am affected only by that glory which proceeds from the Lord."

JUNE 1.

ON THE JUDGMENTS OF THE WORLD.

I. *A true Christian despises the judgments of the world.*

He knows their falsehood, their injustice, their inconstancy, and their blindness, and hence he does not condescend to pay them the least deference. Not that a

Christian should not be anxious, to a certain extent, to acquire a good reputation, but he desires to obtain it in the eyes of wise and virtuous people, who are guided in their judgments only by the lights of reason, and the laws of religion, truth, and justice.

II. *Reasons which induce him to despise them.*

He looks on the world as a confused assemblage of persons of different characters and inclinations, the greater part of whom have neither knowledge nor virtue, nor good conduct, nor judgment—who hardly know how to discern good from evil—who have no idea of true merit—each of whom believes himself capable of governing others, although unable to govern himself—where out of a great multitude you will, with difficulty, find two of the same sentiments, and scarcely one with reasonable opinions.

JUNE 2.

ON THE DESIRE OF PLEASING THE WORLD.

I. *The world does not deserve all the trouble that is taken to please it.*

Even when we have to please only one man in the world through a desire of making or increasing our fortune, to how many painful fatigues, assiduities, and complaisances, must we not submit ! Is not one obliged to study his tastes, his humours, his inclinations, in order to conform to them, and be regulated by his conduct, no matter how disorderly it may be ? Is there, then, O my God ! any one on the earth who deserves such sacrifices ?—No, Lord ! they are due but to thee alone, because thou alone art worthy of them, and because thou art the only master who can bestow on us a suitable reward.

II. *The world is not in a condition to reward the trouble that is taken to please it.*

“Fools that we are,” said those two courtiers of whom St. Augustine speaks

in his book of Confessions; "we forget heaven to think only of the earth; we relinquish substantial goods to run after shadows; we endure a thousand pains and mortifications to obtain the frivolous rewards which the world makes us wait for so long, which it bestows with reluctance, and often suddenly takes away. Would not so many cares and labours be far better employed in meriting the rewards of heaven?"

JUNE 3.

ON VANITY.

I. *It induces us to believe that the whole world esteems us.*

This is an illusion; for, 1st, enlightened persons, who are very few in number, are generally avaricious of their esteem. They more easily see faults; they are more sensibly affected by them; and nothing is more rare and more difficult than to realize their ideas of true merit. 2d, That which appears most estimable in

your own eyes will seem not to exceed mediocrity in the opinion of those who know you, and will, perhaps, excite their contempt.

II. *Nothing is more difficult than to know with accuracy whether we are esteemed by men.*

Their heart is impenetrable ; they are naturally false and deceitful, and it is very seldom that their words express their true sentiments. Politeness obliges them to give constantly to each other, marks of mutual esteem. How shall we distinguish those which custom, civility, and the usages of the world have rendered almost necessary, from those that proceed from the spirit and the heart ? How often does it not happen, that he who speaks well of you before your face, will tear your character in pieces when you are absent !

JUNE 4.

ON THE LOVE OF PRAISES.

I. *Vanity induces us to love praise.*

The greater part of men desire it with so much avidity that it seems to be the only reward they wish to receive for their labours and sufferings. They are not satisfied with having performed a praiseworthy action, they wish to be praised for it: they are not content with possessing talents or virtues, they still wish that the whole world should know and speak of them.

II. *The generality of praise which is bestowed or received in the world, is deceitful.*

They are false either in their object or their principle. 1st, In their object: because things are praised that do not deserve praise, such as foolish expenses, false grandeur, and false virtues. 2d, In their principle: praises are given in order that praise may be bestowed in return, in

order to gain over and seduce those who are the distributors of favours and the arbiters of fortune. Remember, that if true virtue be essentially praiseworthy, it never wishes to be praised ; that it ceases to deserve when it seeks for praise ; and that it is never more worthy of praise than when it is most careful to avoid it, and most grieved to hear it.

JUNE 5.

ON THE FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIAN HOPE.

1. *It is founded on the extent of God's knowledge.*

No merit is concealed from him ; no merit is unknown to him ; he beholds and esteems it every where he finds it. He perceives it even in darkness, even in the most intricate folds of our conscience. In one word, he knows this merit of the heart which escapes the knowledge of men ; and hence it is that he keeps an account with us not only of our actions and words, but also of our intentions and

desires. Hence it comes to pass that, according to the saying of the prophet, he hears "the preparation of our heart;" and it is sufficient to have the desire of pleasing him in order to be agreeable in his eyes.

II. *On the supreme equity by which his judgments are characterized*

For, those judgments of his with which we are so much threatened, are terrible only to sinners. They ought to form the consolation and hope of the just, because they are certain that every good work which they perform, no matter how small or trivial in appearance, is always of great value in the sight of the Lord; that by him every thing is reckoned and nothing is lost, since even "a drop of water given in his name will not be without its reward."

JUNE 6.

ON FAITH.

I. *This faith daily accuses us before God.*

There is such an opposition between faith and the conduct of the generality of mankind, that it is impossible but their faith should constantly exclaim against their conduct. God considers what our faith teaches us, and what we believe; he knows all the truths which he has impressed on our soul by giving us the grace of faith, and he perceives in our morals a constant and perpetual renunciation of those very truths. It is, therefore, properly speaking, our faith which will cry out for vengeance and justice against us.

II. *This faith will confound us one day at the judgment of God.*

How shall we endure its complaints and reproaches? How shall we resist the invincible force of testimony which it shall render against us? What shall we answer to the Sovereign Judge when he will say to us:—"Behold what you have *believed*, and what you have *done*." You believed that you were bound to love me with

your whole heart, and yet you have loved vile creatures more than me. You believed that you were obliged to renounce the world by the engagements of your baptism, and yet you have never ceased to be its slave.

JUNE 7.

ON THE EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE.

I. *Importance of this examination.*

How can one accuse himself of his faults, how can he form a resolution or adopt means to correct them, unless he knows them? And how can he know them, if he be not careful to examine his conscience frequently, and to render an account to himself of all his actions? Jesus Christ compares the true Christian to a skilful merchant. He never fails to examine each day his gains and losses, and if he discovers that he has met with some loss, does he not speedily endeavour to repair it? It is thus we should every day examine the losses we sustain in the

ways of salvation, in order that they may not accumulate, that vice may not take root in our heart, and that our evil habits may not be confirmed.

II. *The state of a soul that neglects the examination of conscience.*

"I have passed," says the wise man, "through the field of the idle and the vineyard of the sluggard; every thing there was full of thistles and covered with thorns." Such is the deplorable state of those worldlings who never take the trouble to examine their consciences. They resemble an uncultivated and deserted field, which produces nothing but briars and thorns. It is by the frequent and habitual practice of this examination, that we discover and eradicate them.

JUNE 8.

ON TWO KINDS OF EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE.

I. *The first is an habitual examination, which extends to all the actions and moments of our life, and which is a necessary consequence of Christian vigilance.*

For it is true to say, that the whole life of a Christian ought to be a secret and continual censure of his thoughts, desires, and actions; that he should ever have, as it were, his soul in his hands, in order to know and appreciate all its sentiments; and that if he allowed it for a moment out of his sight, it will go astray without his knowledge. But as the fickleness of imagination, and the distractions inseparable from human life, too often disturb this habitual state of vigilance, he should each day have a fixed and appointed time for examining his conscience.

II. *With regard to the actual examination.*

St. Chrysostom recommends it to be made at the close of day, and during the first silence of night, as being the most appropriate time : because, 1st, we are then restored to ourselves, and freed from the dissipation of the world ; 2d, because this practice constantly observed will serve as a check to render us more attentive, and to keep us under more restraint on the day which precedes the examination, and the day which follows it.

JUNE 9.

ON THE OBJECT OF THE EXAMINATION OF
CONSCIENCE.

I. It ought to turn on these three questions. What have I done ? In what manner have I done it ? What have I omitted to do ?

The first regards the nature of our actions ; the second, the defects which may creep into them, the circumstances which have attended them, the intention which has produced them, because an act

good in itself may become vicious or disorderly by its circumstances or its motive ; the third regards the sins of omission, which are sometimes innumerable.

II. *We ought to apply those three questions not only 'to the ordinary duties which are common to all the faithful, but also to those duties which are peculiar to our state.*

1st, With regard to ordinary duties, we should see in what we have sinned against God, our neighbour, and ourselves, either by direct and formal crimes, or by omissions. 2d, With regard to the duties peculiar to our state, we should examine in what we have been deficient as a master, as a citizen, as a servant, as a child, as a father of a family, as a public character, charged with such an employment, or such a function in society.

JUNE 10.

ON THE SEVERITY OF THE EXAMINATION OF
CONSCIENCE.

I. *We ought to be severe in this ex-*

amination, because we then assume the functions of God's justice and anger against ourselves, in order to anticipate his judgment.

Now, in that judgment which we desire to prevent, what will not be the accuracy of its researches and the severity of its decisions? They can neither be obscured by error, nor corrupted by interest. Those judgments which we form of ourselves in the examination of our conscience, should, therefore, possess the same qualities. We should form them on the law of God, without listening either to self-love, or to the prudence of the flesh, or to the policy of the world, without interpreting the law by example or by custom, or by the prejudices of the world, but by taking it such as it is, without alteration or distortion.

II. *Because the judgment which we pass on ourselves at the examination of our conscience is not definitive, nor without appeal.*

There is a superior and sovereign tribunal, where it will be discussed and

renewed with much greater exactness. You may flatter and encourage yourself as much as you please, God will be your judge; and the more kindness and indulgence you show yourself, the more you will experience the rigour and severity of his justice.

JUNE 11.

ON THE DEFECTS OF THE EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE.

I. *With regard to its length.*

Some make this examination too seldom; they suffer long intervals to elapse between one examination and another. Hence they have very little knowledge of the state of their conscience. They derive no greater knowledge of themselves, and their heart becomes an impenetrable abyss, which it is impossible for them to fathom. This examination, which should be so exact and so severe, is no more than a superficial and a hasty review, which seems only to obscure the conscience, so

far from enlightening it. They frequently defer it until those moments when the weight of sleep closes the eyes both of their soul and body. What profit could you expect from an examination made with so much tepidity and negligence?

II. *With regard to its object.*

Those persons will sometimes justify themselves, and have recourse to a thousand false pretexts, to excuse their faults. Sometimes they will excuse their actions by the purity of their motives, and sometimes they will attribute them to an unhappy and inevitable necessity. They will perceive their sins, but they will persuade themselves that there would be a real impossibility, and even a species of scandal, in every attempt to make reparation for them.

JUNE 12.

ON THE PRETENDED ADVANTAGES OF BIRTH.

I. *According to the notions of the world :*
A man born of an illustrious family is

destined at his birth for the greatest employments, and the most important concerns, without having any of those talents that are necessary to qualify him for them, and without being obliged to take the necessary time and trouble to prepare himself for them. He knows every thing, without having learned anything ; and he is fit for every thing, without having been qualified for any thing. His merit is, in some manner, verified and established on that of his ancestors ; and full of those vain prejudices, there is no employment, howsoever great or difficult, to which he has not a right to aspire.

II. *According to the principles of religion :*

The man who is most distinguished by his birth is obliged to wait, as well as those who are born in obscurity, for the choice and vocation of God, before he can aspire to charges and employments. He is obliged to examine, before God, whether he be capable, to consult his strength, and to exercise his genius and talents by con-

tinual labour, in order that he may be able to correspond with the views and designs of Providence. He should not employ base intrigues, nor unlawful means, to elevate himself: sloth or want of application, far from being prerogatives of his condition, are rather a crying and manifest abuse, for which he will be accountable at the tribunal of the Sovereign Judge.

JUNE 13.

ON THE DEVOTION OF THE GREAT.

I. *It is seldom entire and perfect.*

Because they believe that they are dispensed from many obligations which the law of God imposes on them. They look upon their state as a privileged condition, which gives them a dispensation in many articles of the law. They never reflect that their state, so far from being a privilege, is an obstacle, and consequently a misfortune in the way of salvation—that there is only one and the same law, one

and the same gospel for the rich and the poor, because all men are equal in God, and in Jesus Christ; in God, before whom all human grandeur is nothing; and in Jesus Christ, who regards all the faithful as his brethren, who knows no title or quality preferable to that of a Christian, and no rights more precious than those which have been acquired by Baptism to a heavenly inheritance.

II. *They make no scruple of many vices condemned by the law.*

Such as, the enterprises of ambition, the airs of disdain, the pretensions of pride, sensibility to injuries, cunning and duplicity in rivalries, injustice in authority, excess and prolongation in pleasures.

JUNE 14.

ON AUTHORITY.

I. *Every man who exercises in the world some portion of public or private authority, owes to God the same obedience which he requires from those who are subject to him.*

If he bear, with regard to them, the name of a father, or a master, he wishes to be obeyed, and he loudly proclaims the rights attached to these titles, when the least want of obedience or submission is shown him. "When I speak to my servant," said the centurion, "I say to him: do this, and he does it." Now has not the God whom we serve, the titles and rights of a father and a master in our regard? "The son honours his father," said he to his people, by the Prophet Malachy, "and the slave, his master; but if I be a father, where is the honour that is due to me? and if I be a master, how can I be disobeyed without a crime?"

II. *We strengthen our own authority by submitting to that of God: it is by him kings reign, and lawgivers decree justice.*

If, therefore, I openly and continually disobey God, what obedience can I expect from those who are subject to me? Will not my example weaken my commands? A father, a master, a man without faith,

without regulation, without morals, how can I dare to reproach my domestics for want of fidelity, my children for want of submission, or for their irregularities? Their eyes will be fixed upon me; and in order even to punish me for my rebellions against himself, will not God permit them to follow my example?

JUNE 15.

ON THE OBLIGATIONS ANNEXED TO THE EMPLOYMENTS AND DIGNITIES OF THE WORLD.

I. *They are established not for the good of particular persons, but for the public interest.*

Behold the end of their institution. One is, therefore, a prince, a magistrate, a judge, a master, or a public man, not for himself, but for others: the very name of charge, which is given to the employments and dignities of the world, proclaims, in some manner, all the weight of obligation which they impose on those to whom they are given. They should not live nor

labour any more for their own good or particular interest : they should no longer have any thing in view but the public good, and the interests of others. Their days are no longer their own ; they belong to the public.

II. *We, therefore, abuse the employments and dignities of the world :*

When we avoid the labour connected with them in order to enjoy their sweets ; when we dispense with those things that are painful in them, and are attached only to what is agreeable ; when we assume them solely for the purpose of rendering our name illustrious, to nourish our ambition, to feed our vanity, or to flatter our pride ; when we follow the bad usages of our predecessors, and fancy we are justified by their example ; in one word, when we neglect the duties of our station, and look upon this neglect as one of its prerogatives.

JUNE 16.

ON THE DIFFERENCE OF DUTIES.

I. *All do not appear of the same importance, and we act improperly when we apply ourselves to the lesser duties, and neglect the more essential ones.*

This is the disorder with which Jesus Christ incessantly reproached the Scribes and Pharisees. "You pay your tenths," said he to them, "with the most scrupulous exactness, whilst you neglect the most important points of law—justice, mercy, and faith." You observe the sabbath with a fidelity almost bordering on superstition, and you are not afraid to commit injustice even on the sabbath day. How many false Christians are there who might recognise themselves in this portrait! How many do we not behold who are wedded to the minutest practices of devotion, whilst they forget those great duties which faith, justice, and charity oblige us to perform!



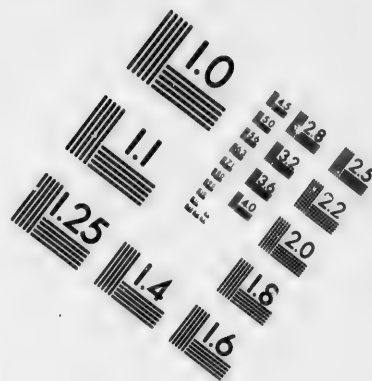
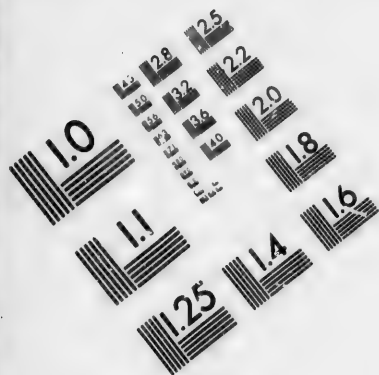
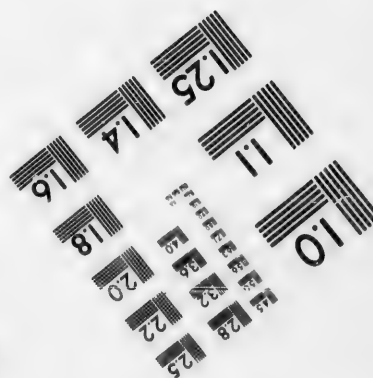
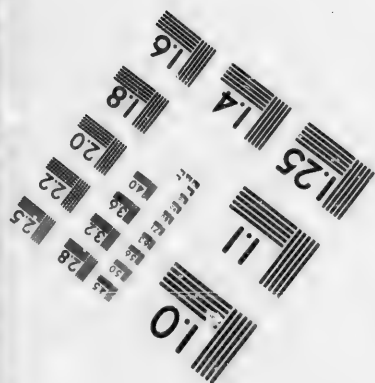
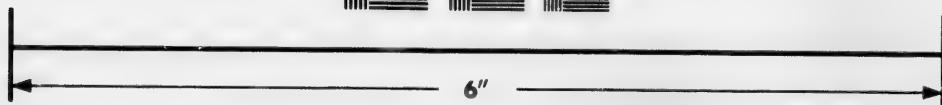
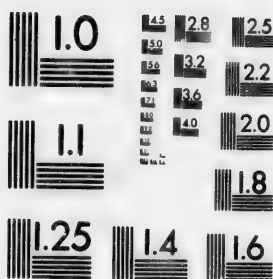


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II. *We also err when we apply ourselves to essentials in such a manner, as to think we may neglect those duties that are less important.*

Observe, that the Saviour of the world has not absolutely condemned the Scribes and Pharisees for having observed all the traditions of their fathers: how could he have imputed it to them as a crime, he who had said it was necessary to observe the whole law without omitting a single point? *Iota unum aut unus apex non præteribit a lege donec omnia fiant.* What then did he do? He approved of what they did, and he blamed them for what they did not. In comparing two sorts of duties, of which some are more essential, and others seem less necessary, he declares to them that they ought to observe the former, and afterwards that they should not neglect the latter: *Hæc oportuit facere et ista non omittere.*

JUNE 17.

ON THE TRUTHS OF FAITH.

I. *They are twofold.*

1st, Speculative truths, dogmas, mysteries which we are bound to believe. 2d, Practical truths, precepts, moral rules, which we are bound to follow. St. Gregory observes that our soul is, with regard to those two kinds of truths, what the eye of our body is in reference to those objects that are presented to it. In order that it may see them clearly and distinctly, they must be placed at a just distance, because too great proximity would prove an obstacle to its action, and too great distance would weaken its power. Thus, our soul cannot have a clear or distinct idea of mysteries and dogmas of faith, because they are too far above us, and their elevation remove them beyond our feeble ken. We should, therefore, believe without being surprised that we are unable to comprehend them.

II. *With regard to practical truths and rules of morals.*

We have but a confused and imperfect notion of them when we have to apply them to ourselves, because we behold too much that which immediately touches us. It is, therefore, with regard to this personal application that we ought to distrust our own lights. We have always sufficient light to regulate the conduct of others; we have often not as much as would suffice to conduct ourselves.

JUNE 18.

ON THE HEINOUSNESS OF SIN.

I. *Sin, according to St. Thomas, consists in preferring the creature to the Creator.*

Yes, every time that a man resolves to violate the law of God, in order to deliver himself up to the attraction of sensible objects, he erects a sort of tribunal in the bottom of his heart; to this he summons the Creator and the creature, and after having examined the advantages which

he may derive from each, he pronounces his judgment in favour of creatures, to the prejudice of what he owes to God.

II. *The reason why the heinousness of sin is concealed from us is, because we judge of it by the extent of the punishment that is annexed to it.*

We estimate our sins not by their natural malice and heinousness, but by the nature of the evils which they are capable of drawing down upon us. They appear to us more or less enormous in proportion as they are likely to prove more or less fatal to us. Even the very name which we give to great crimes has a relation to our self-interest; we call them mortal, because they inflict death on our souls. But if we consider sin with pure and disinterested eyes, we shall perceive, in the very smallest, an attempt calculated to draw down upon us all the maledictions of the Lord, if his justice did not relax its right, and accommodate itself to our weakness.

JUNE 19.

ON THE OUTRAGE WHICH WE OFFER TO GOD BY
SIN.

I. *We disobey his commandments.*

Every sin, therefore, involves an open and daring rebellion against God. He has said to us: "Love me with your whole heart, with your whole soul, with all your strength;" that is, love me without exception or reserve; love me more than yourself; remember that I am a jealous God, that any division of your heart will displease me, and that I am resolved to punish it. And the sinner answers him: "Absolute though your commandments may be, it will not be able to arrest my course; I will love any other object as much as you. I will love it even more than you.

II. *We forget his benefits.*

Every sin includes, therefore, a monstrous ingratitude towards God. He sets no bounds to his goodness and benefits,

and we limit our gratitude and our love. He loads us with blessings, and we look upon an offence against him as a matter of no importance; we owe every thing to him, and yet we fear not to displease him.

JUNE 20.

ON NEGLECTING TO AVOID SMALL FAULTS.

I. *This negligence should not be founded with frailty.*

God knows that we are frail, but he does not permit us to be negligent. He pardons, on account of our weakness, the faults which escape our notice; but he does not extend the same indulgence to the liberty we take of committing them with reflection. "He that despises small faults, shall fall by little and little into great ones." Observe, he does not say—he who commits them by accident and through frailty; but he who contemns them, that is, he who commits them from principle and through habit.

II. *Difference between the sinner and the just with regard to small faults.*

Both have the misfortune to fall into them, since we are all sinners, and because there is no life so pure and perfect as not to be stained by some blot in the eyes of the Lord; but the just man sins by surprise, and the sinner with reflection. The just man perceives the smallest faults and reproaches himself with them; the sinner does not perceive them at all, or if he do, he does not condescend to pay any attention to them. The one has no sooner fallen than he raises himself again; the other remains contented in his sin; the one corrects himself, the other perseveres. Examine here your conduct and sentiments with regard to trivial faults, and judge whether you ought to be classed with the just, or with sinners.

JUNE 21.

ON VAIN EXCUSES FOR TRIVIAL FAULTS.

I. *They are not as excusable as we imagine.*

Because we cannot excuse them by the extreme violence of the inclinations that induce us to commit them, nor by any important interests which we gain in committing them, nor by the greatness and difficulty of the sacrifice which it costs us to avoid them. On account of their trivial nature, they are independent of all these motives.

II. *Hence, we have reason to fear that those who are guilty of them have a secret inclination to commit much greater sins.*

For, their fidelity to God's law is so limited and restrained, that they rather fear to transgress it fully and entirely, than want the desire to violate it. A person must be very near great sins, when he approaches their limits so willingly and so often; from this sort of dispute with God, would it not seem that he regrets what he has given him? And if he trifles with the law which he observes, is there not reason to fear that he loves the sin which he dares not commit?

JUNE 22.

ON THE HABIT OF COMMITTING TRIVIAL FAULTS.

I. *It is extremely dangerous to salvation, because we do not feel its danger.*

One is terrified at the habit of committing great crimes, but is easily familiarized to trivial faults. No one casts himself down a known precipice: but if it be unknown or concealed, it is approached without fear, and encountered without reflection. Such is the habit of trivial faults. The chains which they form become stronger in proportion as they press less heavily on our innocence, which is deceived by their light nature; smaller faults do not at all alarm conscience; no scruple is made of committing or repeating them, and those infidelities enter in some manner into the plan and order of our conduct.

II. *Because this habit insensibly leads to much greater disorders.*

The Scripture says: "He that con-

tenus small faults, shall fall by little and little into great crimes," and this oracle is verified by daily experience. Solomon is now a sensualist, and then becomes an idolator. Saul begins by jealousy, and ends in being furious. Absalom, by being ambitious, becomes a rebel. Pilate, by being timid, becomes unjust. Judas, by being interested, becomes a traitor and a perfidious wretch. Reprobation commences by negligence, and it ends in crime and injustice.

JUNE 23.

ON THE SMALL ACTS OF VIRTUE.

I. *It is a mistake to suppose that sanctity is attained only by heroic actions.*

You are disposed, it is true, to make the greatest sacrifices for God, if it should be necessary; but the opportunities of making them are rare, and if you wait until they occur,—1st, You are not sure of meeting them. 2nd, If they should happen, you may not have strength enough

to surmount those great trials. Rest satisfied, therefore, in sanctifying yourself, by those acts of virtue which you have a daily opportunity of performing and which are within your reach. Suffer patiently those refusals which displease you, those proposals which are irksome to you, those importunities which are disagreeable, &c. &c.

II. *A treasure is laid up in heaven by the multiplication of small acts of virtue.*

This is the treasure which Jesus Christ calls, "an unfailing treasure in heaven," a treasure which never fails, because it is increased every day. If these small acts of virtue are not considerable in themselves, they become so by their multitude. All these practices united together, form in time a fund of spiritual riches in our soul. By them we sanctify all the days, and consequently all the years of our life, and the sanctification of all our years constitutes a holy life.

JUNE 24.

ON THE MERIT OF SMALL ACTS OF VIRTUE.

I. *If they be small in their matter, they may become great by their principle.*

The merit of our actions is not estimated by the importance or trivial nature of their object. What principally serves to enhance their value is, the interior disposition of him who performs them, the end which he proposes to himself, the greatness and purity of the motive which induces him to act. He does little for God, but he would wish to do more. He takes advantage of the smallest occasions to glorify and praise him, but he would desire to have much greater opportunities of doing so.

II. *We may still farther judge of their merit by the great reward which is promised them.*

The Lord does not say to the faithful servant that his life has been remarkable for brilliant actions, but he tells him—

“Because you have been faithful in small things, come and receive the reward which is due to you.” The world considers as puerile and superstitious those small acts of virtue which you practise with so much exactness and fidelity ; I judge differently of them : “you shall enter into the joy of your Lord.” Could he give us a higher idea of an act than to tell us that it merits such a recompense ?

JUNE 25.

ON VAIN GLORY.

I. *It corrupts all virtues, and destroys the merit of all our actions.*

1st, When it is the principle of our actions ; 2d, When it is their effect. Now it is their principle when we act for our own particular glory ; it is their effect when we place our comfort and satisfaction in the glory which they attract. “They have received their reward in this life,” said the Saviour, when speaking of

those who are idolaters of vain glory. They, therefore, have no reward to expect in the other.

II. *Hidden virtues and works of ordinary piety are less exposed to vain glory than renowned acts of virtue.*

The former excite no applause ; they generally escape the observation of men, and never gain their esteem. They either do not perceive them, or if they do behold them, they are not acquainted with their merit : these are the fruits of justice and sanctity, which grow, if we may use the expression, at the foot, and under the shade of the cross. We should be on our guard against vain glory in the performance of renowned virtues and actions ; one observes them because one is observed, but how beautiful is it not, to regulate ourselves on those obscure occasions where we have no beholder but ourselves, no witness nor judge but God and our conscience !

JUNE 26.

ON THE USE WHICH A CHRISTIAN OUGHT TO
MAKE OF HIS TALENTS.

I. *He ought to endeavour to know them.*

Some have great and others but middling talents. Men differ from each other in the quality as much as in the quantity of their talents. Of the servants in the gospel the first had five, the second two, and the third had only one. Every Christian is obliged to profit by his talents in order to establish the kingdom of God in his soul, and if possible in the souls of others. Do not imagine that you are dispensed from this obligation by saying that your talents do not exceed mediocrity; there is no mediocrity as far as God and your salvation are concerned. Have you not a mind capable of knowing God and knowing your duties? Have you not a heart capable of loving him? Was it not to merit heaven, and accomplish his will, that the Creator placed you upon the earth?

II. *Two abuses of talents which are to be avoided.*

Those who have great talents endeavour to display them for their own glory, and by that means render them useless for salvation. Those, on the contrary, whose talents are weak and obscure, will not, through a mistaken diffidence, attempt to apply them. Two rules are to be opposed to those two abuses:—1st, Employ great talents with humility. 2d, Make use of small talents with confidence.

JUNE 27.

ON THE STATE OF TEPIDITY.

I. *This is an ordinary state, even amongst those who make a profession of piety.*

A person of this class is exempt from great crimes and from gross vices; but he has no order for heavenly things, no relish for prayer, no application to labour, no fervour or piety in the practice of his duties; in this state he has, if we may say so, neither vice nor virtue. He avoids

evil without doing good. This is what is called a state of tepidity, and negligence in the ways of salvation.

II. *Danger of this state.*

It may be compared to a slow and secret fever, which weakens the strength of the soul by little and little, and which consumes from day to day its life and substance. A person remains tranquil in this state, because he does not feel himself guilty of any crime. He will admit that he does not belong to the number of fervent Christians; but he does not imagine he should be degraded to the rank of sinners. We see, nevertheless, that the Lord equally rejects the tepid, and the unfaithful soul; we see that he pronounces the same maledictions against him who entirely neglects the work of God, and him who performs it negligently: "Cursed is he who doth the work of God negligently."

JUNE 28.

ON THE ABUSE OF RICHES.

I. *We abuse them when we do not defray our necessary expenses.*

Virtue consists in avoiding every excess; it is found only in that just and golden mean which is separated at an equal distance from two extremes. *In medio virtus.* There may be, therefore, an excess in economy as well as in profusion, and every excess is vicious. You take such care of your riches as even to refuse what is necessary; you are given to avarice. Is there any vice more contrary to reason and religion? 1st, To reason; for to what purpose have we riches if we make no use of them? 2d, To religion; which prescribes us an entire and absolute detachment from earthly goods.

II. *We abuse them when we indulge in superfluous expenses.*

This is another excess much more com-

mon, as well as more pernicious, than the former; namely, to squander riches in dissipation. Worldlings believe that they are the real owners of their property, whereas they are only stewards and administrators.—They imagine that all expenditure, no matter how lavish, is lawful on their part, because they are able to bear it; they even fancy that they may derange the state of their affairs without charging their conscience; but they are in error, for religion equally condemns all excessive expenditure as well as all excessive economy.

JUNE 29.

ON THE DISTINCTION OF NECESSARY AND SUPERFLUOUS.

I. *A Christian should consider this distinction as one of the most important objects of his attention and his scruples.*

1st, He is only the trustee and steward of the goods which he possesses; he will, therefore, be accountable at the judgment

seat of God for the use he will have made of them. 2d, At this judgment God will himself make the distinction between what is necessary and what is superfluous. He will say that the one belonged to the rich, and that the other was entirely the property of the poor. It is, then, of the utmost importance to the salvation of the rich man to know the exact distinction between one and the other; because if he employ for his own use that superfluity which does not belong to him, he will be condemned as an unfaithful steward before the tribunal of God.

II. *This distinction is founded—1st, on the essential and indispensable requisites of our condition. 2d, On the extent of our means.*

Every time that our expenses exceed either of those limits, or both together, it is a superfluous expense, and consequently all the property which is thus laid out, belongs to the poor. The mere quality of being rich is not, therefore, a ground

for heavy expenditure ; it only supposes a more considerable superfluity, and consequently a strict obligation of relieving a greater number of poor, or of procuring them greater comfort and relief.

JUNE 30.

ON LUXURY.

I. *Some are addicted to a general luxury which extends to every thing.*

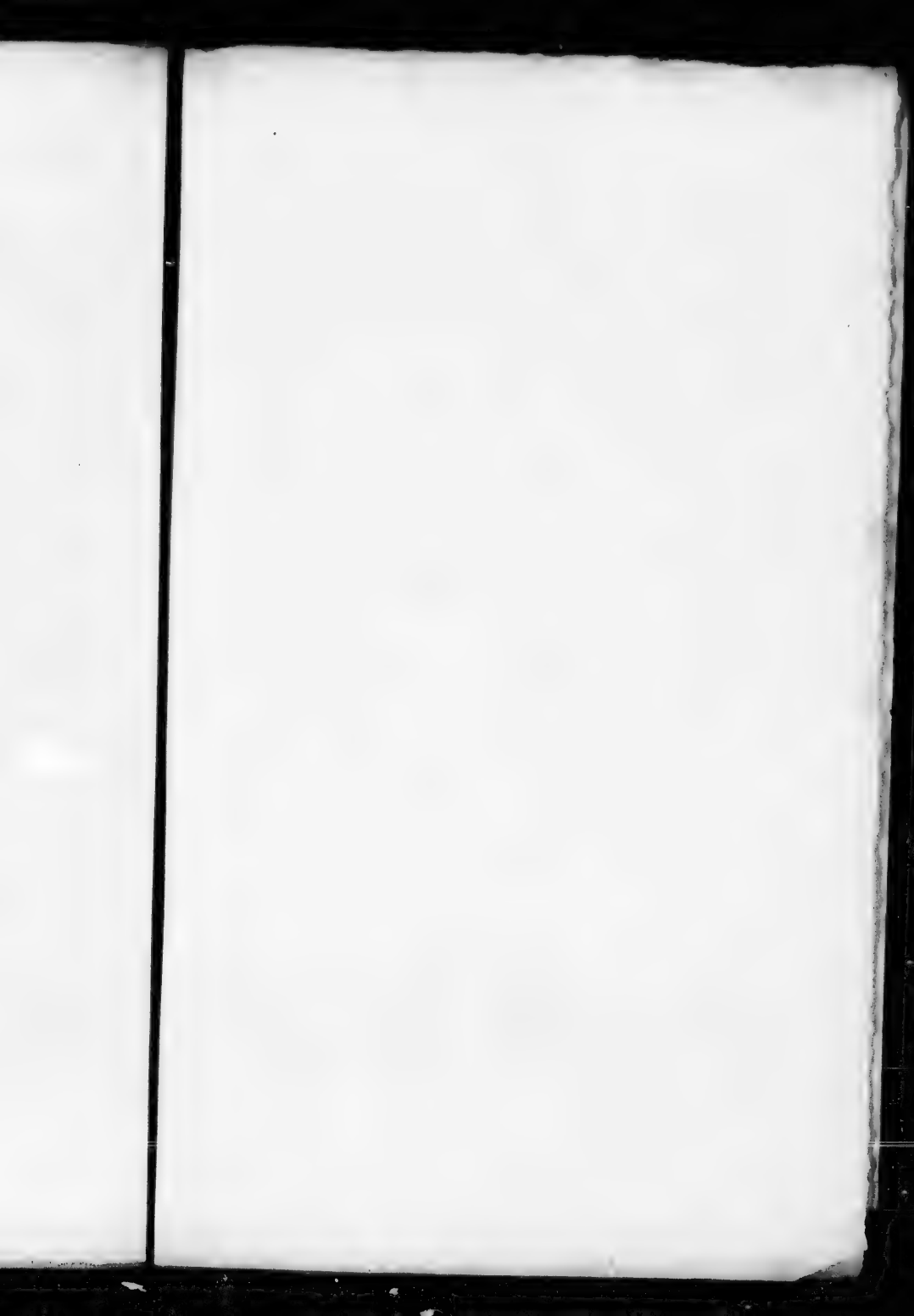
They wish to make a display in every thing ; they follow no other rule in their expenses but their own will, which embraces with equal ardour every thing that the world patronizes, every thing that vanity inspires, and every thing which their caprice is able to suggest. In vain does religion tell them : " Limit yourself to what is simply necessary in relation to your state ;" they are deaf to its voice, and they listen only to those avaricious and interested flatterers who applaud all their expenses, because they profit by them.

II. *Others are addicted to a whimsical luxury.*

They carry certain whimsical and capricious expenses to an excess, and for these they spare nothing, whilst in all others they are moderate, limited, and sometimes even covetous and parsimonious. Thus, the rich glutton was principally given to the luxury of the table and of dress. He was clothed in purple and fine linen, and sat every day at a sumptuous table. Nevertheless, he was buried in hell, not for having been rich, says St. Chrysostom, but for having made a bad use of his riches.

END OF VOL. I.







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